Grace Harlowe's Fourth Year at Overton College

The College Girls Series

Jessie Graham Flower, A.M.

Horton R. Shultz

Read

Grace Paused in the Doorway.

Frontispiece.

Grace Harlowe's Fourth Year at Overton College

By

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CHAPTER I

A SEMPER FIDELIS LUNCHEON

"THE skies must smile and the sun must shine
When Semper Fidelis goes out to dine,"

sang Arline Thayer joyously as she rearranged her sofa pillows for the eighth time, patting each one energetically before placing it, then stepping back to view the effect. "Aren't you glad every one's here, and things have begun to happen again, Ruth?" she asked blithely. "I hope no one disappoints us. I wish this room were larger. Still, it held eighteen girls one night last year. Don't you remember my Hallowe'en party, and what a time we had squeezing in here?"

"It is so good in Mrs. Kane to let us have the dining room with Mary to serve the oysters," said Ruth. "We never could do things properly up here."

"I know it. Oysters are such slippery old

things, even on the half shell," returned Arline, who was not specially fond of them. "Let me see. The girls will be here at four o'clock. We are to have oysters, soup, a meat course, salad and dessert. That makes five different courses in five different houses. It will be eight o'clock before we reach the dessert. I am glad that is to be served in Grace's room. We always have a good time at Wayne Hall."

To the readers of "Grace Harlowe's First Year at Overton College," "Grace Harlowe's Second Year at Overton College" and "Grace Harlowe's Third Year at Overton College," Grace Harlowe and her various intimate associates have become familiar figures. Those who made her acquaintance, together with that of her three friends, Nora O'Malley, Jessica Bright and Anne Pierson, during her high school days will recall with pleasure the many eventful happenings of these four happy years as set forth in "Grace Harlowe's Plebe Year at High School," "Grace Harlowe's Sophomore Year at High School," "Grace Harlowe's Junior Year at High School" and "Grace Harlowe's Senior Year at High School."

The September following the graduation of the four friends from high school had seen their paths diverge widely, for Nora and Jessica had entered an eastern conservatory of music, while

Anne and Grace, after due deliberation, had decided upon Overton College. Miriam Nesbit, of Oakdale fame, had entered college with them, and the trio of friends had spent three eventful years at Overton.

"It is time we gathered home," grumbled Arline. "I have hardly seen Grace or any of the Semper Fidelis girls this week. They have all been so popular that they haven't given a thought to their neglected little friends."

"Let me see," returned Ruth slyly. "How many nights have you stayed quietly at home this week?"

"Not one, you rascal," retorted Arline, laughing. "I ought to be the last one to grumble. But in spite of all the rush, I have missed the dear old quartette."

"So have I," declared Ruth earnestly. "Twenty minutes to four. They will soon be here."

"Yes. I asked Grace to come as early as possible," said Arline. "There, I hear the bell now." Arline whisked out of the room and peered anxiously over the baluster. "Hello, Grace," she called joyously. "Hurry as fast as ever you can. Where are your faithful three?"

"I came on ahead," laughed Grace. "I had promised you that I would, and being a person

of my word, I didn't wish to disappoint you. When I left Wayne Hall Miriam was playing maid to Elfreda. The new gown she had made for the luncheon didn't arrive until the last minute. So Miriam stayed to help her dress. It is a perfectly darling gown. Just wait until you see Elfreda in it. She hasn't gained an ounce since she went home last spring. She has had a strenuous time all summer to keep her weight down. You must ask her to tell you about it."

"I will," promised Arline, with an anticipatory smile. "But where is Anne?"

"I left Anne finishing a letter to her mother. She will be here with Miriam and Elfreda. Isn't it splendid to think you and Ruth can be together this year?"

Grace ran lightly up the stairs in Arline's wake, and a moment later greeted Ruth with outstretched hands.

"Take the seat of honor, Grace," directed Arline, gently propelling her toward her best leather upholstered armchair. "Isn't it obliging of the weather to stay so nice and warm? We don't need hats or coats. You were sensible and didn't wear either. Not having to bother with wraps will save time, too."

"I am highly impressed with this house-to-house luncheon," declared Grace. "It was clever in you to suggest it, Arline."

"Oh, these progressive luncheons are nothing new," returned Arline quickly. "I have read that they are extremely popular among college and high school girls. I am sure I don't know why I never before proposed that we give one. It is going to be lots of fun, isn't it? There's the bell again. I hope that maid hasn't gone on a vacation. It usually takes her forever." Arline darted out of the room to hang over the baluster once more.

This time it was the Emerson twins, and by four o'clock the last member of the club had taken her place beside her sisters in Arline's room.

"As we are all here," announced Arline, "we might as well begin. The feast awaits you downstairs in the dining room; that is, a very small part of it. There is one beautiful feature about this luncheon, we are to have plenty of exercise between each course. Are all of you hungry?"

There was a lively chorus of affirmatives.

"Then choose your partners and come along," ordered the little curly-haired girl.

It did not take long to dispose of the oysters, and, headed by Sara and Julia Emerson, the little procession of girls moved on to Ralston House, where the twins were to play hostess and serve the soup.

"You can thank your stars and me that you don't have to squeeze into our room and eat your soup from cups instead of Mrs. Bryant's best soup plates," Julia informed her guests as they swarmed up the steps. "Mrs. Bryant couldn't see this luncheon at first. She had no appreciation of what a really important affair it was to be. I had to use all my persuasive powers on her. But I won, and she descended to the kitchen and made the soup herself."

"I think we owe Julia a special vote of thanks," declared Miriam Nesbit a little later, as she finished her soup. "This vermicelli soup is the best I ever tasted."

"It can't be beaten, can it?" asked Sara Emerson eagerly. "That was why we were so anxious to take the soup course on our shoulders. We knew what was in store for us if we could make Mrs. Bryant see things in our light."

"S-h-h, she's coming!" warned Julia. "For goodness' sake, Sara, be careful."

Mrs. Bryant, a rather austere person and not in the least like her sister, Mrs. Elwood, who managed Wayne Hall, walked into the dining room at this juncture, apparently in the best of humors.

Arline glanced inquiringly at Grace, who nodded slightly, whereupon the dainty president of the Semper Fidelis Club rose and made the ma-

tron a pretty little speech of thanks in behalf of the club. Then the luncheon party started on their way again, Mrs. Bryant hospitably seeing them to the door and extending a smiling invitation to come again.

"I knew she couldn't resist us," chuckled Sara Emerson, as the girls filed down the walk. "A combination like ours is safe to make its way anywhere. Come on, Marian and Elizabeth, you are the hostesses now. Shall we head for Livingstone Hall?"

"No, indeed," smiled Marian. "Bess and I are not so lucky. It is Vinton's for ours. But we can assure you that you won't be disappointed in the layout."

One of the features of the luncheon was the fact that no one knew until the moment of serving what the various courses were to be. When it was discovered that Marian and Elizabeth had ordered fried chicken, for which Vinton's was famous, with potatoes au gratin and tiny French peas, there was general rejoicing. It took the better part of an hour to eat these good things, and the guests, feeling that they were on familiar ground, enjoyed themselves hugely.

"Oh, dear!" groaned Elfreda, "I know I have gained a pound since I started out this afternoon. I haven't eaten so much at one time for ages. There is still the salad and dessert to

come. I can't possibly miss either one of them."

"Never mind, Elfreda," soothed Emma Dean; "we won't invite you to the next luncheon, then you can——"

"Just try leaving me out and see what happens," retorted Elfreda threateningly. "You may find yourself locked in your room on that self-same day with the key missing."

"Be good, both of you," admonished Miriam, "or I'll see that neither of you get any dessert."

"Grace and Anne wouldn't be so mean," returned Elfreda with supreme self-assurance.

"How could we blast such touching faith?" laughed Anne.

"There, what did I tell you?" asked Elfreda, turning triumphant eyes on Emma. "Now, leave me out if you dare."

"I don't dare. I don't want to," declared Emma affably. "I was merely trying to be pleasant and helpful. If you were not invited to the spread, naturally you wouldn't eat, and if you didn't eat, then you wouldn't have to worry about that extra pound. It is all very simple."

"Very!" agreed Elfreda, with such scathing emphasis that the exchange of words ended in a general giggle at Emma's expense.

"Now that you've all finished laughing at

me," she declared good-naturedly, "I hereby invite all of you, even Elfreda, to Martell's for the salad, which is my part of the ceremony."

"Oh, goody, it's Waldorf!" exclaimed Elfreda delightedly, as, seated about the big corner table at Martell's, perhaps twenty minutes later, they saw the salad brought on. "You knew what we liked, didn't you, Emma?"

"I did, in spite of my simple tendencies," murmured Emma.

"That was a well merited thrust," laughed Elfreda, laying her hand lightly over her heart.

"And now Wayne Hall and our humble apartment await you," proclaimed Grace when the last vestige of salad had disappeared. "Anne and I extend you a pressing invitation to dessert and conversation. Although this is to be a strictly informal session of the club, we may wish to discuss certain club business. The evening is before us. We ought to make good use of it."

"And so we shall," returned Emma Dean, as they rose to go. "The affairs of the nation shall be discussed and adjusted to-night."

"And the world will be upside down forever after," predicted Elfreda.

"Don't croak," reproved Emma. "Who knows what this night may bring forth? It may engender indigestion, or a stern injunction to

make less noise on the part of Mrs. Elwood, but whatever the future has in store for us, we shall have had at least one luncheon worth remembering."

CHAPTER II

THE LAST FRESHMAN

IT was ten minutes past seven when the club settled down to the frozen custard and delicious cakes that Grace and Anne had provided for them. Then Elfreda, who had taken upon herself the making and serving of the coffee, returned after a brief absence with a percolator of steaming coffee, Miriam following with the sugar and cream.

"Isn't it too bad we never thought of doing this before?" said Marian Cummings.

"Something had to be left for our senior year," said Anne Pierson.

"Do you know, I am anything but joyful at being a senior," announced Elfreda Briggs. "Of course, it is a satisfaction to know that one has weathered the last three years' examinations and is practically on Easy Street as far as studies go, but every now and then comes the awful feeling, 'only a little while and it will all be over'—college, I mean."

" 'Yet a few days, and thee the all-beholding sun shall see no more.' "

quoted Emma Dean lugubriously.

"Not quite so bad as that," returned Elfreda with an appreciative grin.

"Even we juniors feel more or less that way," said Laura Atkins. "I never had any real fun until I came to Overton. The time has gone so fast I can't believe that it is two years since I locked Grace and Anne out of their room and behaved like a savage. I don't wonder Elfreda named me the Anarchist. I did my best to live up to the name."

"Oh, forget about that," murmured Elfreda, looking embarrassed.

The members of the club were wholly familiar with the history of Laura Atkins's freshman year and admired her for the matter-of-fact way in which she was wont to discuss her early shortcomings. Under the sunny influence of the four girls who had helped her to find herself, she had developed into a gracious and likeable young woman. She and Mildred Taylor were the guests of the club that afternoon.

"What is the latest word from erring freshmen? Has any one heard?" asked Grace. Laura's reference to herself had set Grace to thinking of freshmen in general.

"We've six at Ralston," groaned Julia Emerson. "The usual variety—neither rich nor poor, brilliant nor dull, amiable nor perverse, goody-goody nor lawless. Just that comfort-

able, maddeningly commonplace variety of girls who never go to extremes."

"Extremes are dangerous," declared Elfreda judicially.

"Better be an extremist than nothing at all," grumbled Julia.

"For the first time since we came here, there isn't a single freshman at Wayne Hall," announced Miriam.

"Are all the rooms taken?" asked Marian Cummings.

"All but half of one room," replied Emma Dean. "The illustrious Miss West is alone in her glory. I heard Mrs. Elwood lamenting today because that particular half was still vacant."

"Some one may take it yet," said Arline Thayer. "This is only the second week of the term. Only yesterday a freshman arrived at Morton House. Girls have been known to drift into Overton a whole month after the beginning of the term."

"Did Miss West ask for a single?" questioned Grace of Emma.

"No, she doesn't in the least yearn for one. You know she is paying her own way through college. She told Mrs. Elwood that it was all she could do to keep her head above water as it was and couldn't afford to think of a single.

Of course, Mrs. Elwood hasn't charged her single rates yet, but if no one else appears she will either have to pay the advanced price or make other arrangements. Mrs. Elwood knows of two girls who have been trying to get into Wayne Hall for a long time, and who will come bag and baggage the moment she says the word."

"That is too bad," said Miriam slowly—"for Miss West, I mean."

A significant silence fell upon the company of girls. The same thought was in each one's mind. It was Elfreda who finally voiced it. "It looks as though the S. F.'s ought to get busy," she said slangily. "We might lend her the money to make up the difference."

"I am afraid that wouldn't do," objected Anne, whose practical experience with poverty had made her wise. "I imagine with her it is a question of being economical. It wouldn't be fair to tempt her to extravagance, for a single would be the height of improvidence, particularly if she had to go in debt for it."

"Anne is right," declared Gertrude Wells decidedly. "But to be perfectly frank, I am not in favor of the club taking up Miss West's case. You all know how badly she behaved toward us last year, particularly toward Grace. If we offered her help, no doubt we should be ridi-

culed for our pains. I think the best thing for us to do is to let her alone."

"So do I," echoed Sarah Emerson.

Several affirmative murmurs went up from various girls.

"Now, see here," began Elfreda Briggs emphatically. "What is the use in our calling ourselves Semper Fidelis and then going back on our principles? When we organized this club, we didn't make any conditions as to who should be helped and who shouldn't, did we? Whoever needed help was to have it. If there is any way in which we can be of assistance to Miss West, then it is our duty to respond cheerfully."

"Hurrah for you, Elfreda!" cried Arline. "You're an honor to the Sempers and your own sweet native land. Of course we aren't going to pick and choose whom we shall help. I think we had better appoint a committee to call on Miss West and find out if we can render her any financial assistance."

"I'm in favor of that committee," declared Emma Dean, "only don't ask me to serve on it."

"Grace and Arline are the very ones for that stunt," proposed Julia Emerson. "They can do it to perfection."

"Please don't ask me," said Grace with sudden earnestness. "I just can't, that's all." Her face flushed, and a distressed look crept

into her eyes which her friends were quick to note.

"Suppose you and Elfreda call on her, Miriam?" proposed Arline. "You two are very valiant."

"Excuse me," said Elfreda so promptly that everyone laughed. "I may look valiant, but to every woman her own fear, you know."

"Oh, look, girls!" The sudden exclamation came from Gertrude Wells, who was sitting near the open window. "There's the automobile bus from the station. It's stopping in front of Wayne Hall, too."

There was a concerted rush for the two windows.

"I wonder who it can be!" cried Emma Dean. "Wouldn't it be funny if it were the greatly desired freshman, Miss West's other half?"

The watchers saw the bus door open. Then out of it stepped the tallest girl they had ever seen.

"I believe she is seven feet tall," muttered Emma Dean. "I am sure of it."

"Nonsense," laughed Miriam. "But she is not far from six. I wish it were daylight, then we could see her face."

"I wonder who she can be," mused Arline.

"There is only one answer," smiled Miriam Nesbit. "As Emma just stated, she must be

Miss West's other half. However, we shall know before long."

A moment later they heard the bell ring, then up from the hall came the sound of Mrs. Elwood's voice speaking in surprised but pleased tones. A voice almost masculine in its depth answered. There was a tramp of feet up the stairs and down the hall. In the next instant the door of the end room had opened and closed upon the newcomer.

"Girls, you are saved," proclaimed Gertrude Wells dramatically. "We have been wasting our valuable time to-night trying to solve Miss West's problem, while all the time the queen of the giants was hurrying as fast as ever she could to the rescue."

There was a faint general laugh at the remark, then Elfreda said severely, "Young women, do you consider making uncomplimentary remarks about new students in the line of true Overton spirit?"

"But she did look seven feet tall," persisted Emma Dean.

"Think how deceitful appearances sometimes are," reminded Miriam.

"Never judge a person by moonlight," added Ruth Denton.

"Never judge them at all," smiled Grace. "Let the poor freshman rest in peace. I have a

last sweet surprise for you. Name it and you can have it."

"Caramels," guessed Julia Emerson.

"Marshmallows," said Gertrude Wells.

"Oh, I know," cried Arline. "Nut chocolates; the delicious kind that old candy man in Oakdale makes."

"Some one must have told you," said Grace, going to the closet and returning with a huge box. "You are all to stay here until the last chocolate is eaten."

It was on the ragged edge of half-past ten when the Semper Fidelis Club trooped happily across the campus to their various houses, but, faithful to their duty, the big candy box reposed in Grace's waste basket, quite empty.

"I wonder how Kathleen West received her roommate," observed Miriam. She and Elfreda had lingered for a moment in Grace's room after the others had gone.

"It is fortunate for her that a belated freshman happened along," was Grace's serious reply.

"But most unfortunate for the freshman," added Elfreda. "However, this one looks perfectly capable of fighting her own battles."

CHAPTER III

AN ACCIDENT AND A SURPRISE

"WELL, what do you think of her?" inquired Elfreda Briggs the following morning, poking her head in at Grace's door, a quizzical smile on her round face. Grace and Anne had left the breakfast table a few minutes before Elfreda, who had foregone finishing her breakfast and rushed upstairs to hear her friends' opinion of the tall freshman, who had seemed taller than ever as she stalked uncompromisingly into the dining room that morning in Kathleen West's wake. The newspaper girl looked anything but in a happy frame of mind, and after several covert glances in her direction, Grace decided that the new arrival had not been met with open arms on the part of Kathleen.

"What do I think of her?" repeated Grace. "A good many things, I should say. What do you think?"

"I think she is the most interesting and entertaining person I've seen in years," declared Elfreda exaggeratingly.

"Then her entertaining powers do not lie in speech," laughed Anne. "I heard her say three

things this morning at the table. They were, 'yes,' 'thank you' and 'I believe so.' "

"She didn't talk, that's a fact," admitted Elfreda, "but she looked as though she was keeping up an awful thinking. Does any one know from whence she came, and why?"

"I don't know anything about her," said Grace, shaking her head, "but I am sure that you will find out everything worth knowing before night. You will be able to see a great deal, you know."

"Don't flatter me," grinned Elfreda. "That's no joke, though," she added hastily. "I'll find out, never fear, and then I'll tell you girls."

"What a comfort it is to have the latest news brought to one's door every morning," jeered Anne.

"You'll find yourself without that comfort if you are not more respectful," threatened Elfreda. "I'll carry my news to other doors where it will be more highly appreciated."

"Your threats fail to impress me," retorted Anne. "You know that you couldn't bear to ignore us."

"I know I shall be late to chapel, and that you will be later," replied Elfreda significantly. "Tardiness is unbecoming in a senior. I am sorry to be obliged to remind you of it."

"Save your sorrow and come along," called

Miriam Nesbit from the doorway. "Aren't you going to chapel this morning, Grace?"

"Not this morning," replied Grace, not raising her eyes from the book over which she was poring. "This is psychology morning and I'm very shaky on the lesson. I feel in my bones that I'll be called upon to recite, so please go away, all of you, and don't bother me," she finished with an affectionate smile that did not accord with her blunt words.

"Going, going, gone!" flung back Elfreda over her shoulder as she left the room, followed by Miriam and Anne.

Grace glanced anxiously at the clock, then concentrated her mind anew upon her reading. The sound of hurried feet on the stairs and through the halls, accompanied by an occasional murmur of voices as the students left Wayne Hall, was borne to her ears as she read and tried to familiarize herself with the main points of the lesson. Gradually the house settled down to quiet, and Grace, becoming thoroughly interested in her work, lost all track of time.

The sound of a terrific crash, apparently just outside the half-opened door, brought her to her feet in alarm. "What was that?" she exclaimed. Stepping to the door she looked up and down the hall. From the room at the end, the door of which was ajar, came a jingling

sound as of dishes being piled together. For a moment Grace hesitated, then walked toward the sound. At the doorway she paused again; then the sight that met her eyes caused her to spring forward with an impulsive, "What a dreadful smash! Do let me help you."

The extremely tall young woman who sat on the edge of her bed surveying the wreck of her washbowl, pitcher and every other piece of china that five minutes before had reposed confidently on the top of her washstand regarded Grace ruefully. There was a twinkle in her eyes, however, that belied her regret. "It did make considerable noise, I imagine," she said crisply. "Strange the rest of the students here haven't appeared on the scene."

Grace involuntarily retreated a step or two, her face flushing. She could not endure the idea of being thought an intruder.

"Don't go," said the tall young woman, in the same crisp tone. "I didn't mean that you were an intruder. I only wonder that no one else came. The wreck of the Hesperus wasn't serious compared with this," she said dryly, indicating the littered floor. "I tried to move my wash stand. It stuck. Then all of a sudden it gave way and I fell back, dragging it with me. I had hold of one end of it with both hands, and I was stronger than I thought, for I just

missed sitting on the floor and receiving all that china in my lap. I was horrified for a second, but all of a sudden the funny side of it struck me, and I sat down on my couch and laughed until I cried. I was just wiping my eyes and preparing to pick up the pieces when you came in. Perhaps you thought I was crying over it. Can you imagine me in tears?" she added humorously.

"Hardly," said Grace with a frank smile that was reflected on the tall young woman's face.

"No, I am not one of the weeping kind," she declared sturdily. "I come of good, old, undaunted New England stock. My name is Patience Eliot and I live just outside Boston. I might as well tell you all about myself in the first place, because I decided at breakfast that I liked you. I know your Christian name because I heard your friends addressing you as 'Grace' this morning, but I don't know your surname."

"I am Grace Harlowe, at your service," replied Grace lightly, "and it is always gratifying to be liked. I saw you last night when you arrived. I was entertaining a crowd of girls, and, of course, we couldn't resist running to the window when one of the girls happened to see the bus stopping in front of the house."

"Were you at the window?" asked Miss Eliot

unconcernedly. "I didn't see you. In fact, I wasn't thinking of anything but getting into my room and to bed. I had been on the train long enough to become thoroughly tired of it. It was two hours late, too. We should have arrived at Overton at half-past seven, but it was half-past nine when the train pulled into the Overton station."

"You must have been very tired," sympathized Grace. "I hope you rested well last night. If there is anything I can do for you in the way of showing you to the registrar's office or wherever you may wish to go, I shall be only too glad to do so. My first recitation happens to be at ten o'clock this morning, so I have plenty of time."

"My first duty lies before me," returned Miss Eliot grimly, pointing to the floor. "I think you had better direct me to a store where I can replace this. If I ask Mrs. Elwood to set a price on it, she will cheat herself."

"Why, how did you know that?" asked Grace in surprise. "You only saw her for a few minutes last night."

"That was long enough to discover several things concerning her greatly to her credit," was the calm answer. "However, as you have been so kind as to offer to direct me, I think I will ask you to take me to the registrar's office.

She has been expecting me ever since college opened. I imagine she has given me up by this time." Stepping over the wreck of broken china to the closet, she took her hat from its hook on the inner side of the door, and, putting it on without glancing into the mirror, announced herself in readiness to depart. "I'll lock the door on this wreck and have it removed when I return," she said.

The registrar was writing busily, her head bent intently over her work, when Grace led the way into her office. "Good morning, Miss Sheldon," she began. "This is Miss Eliot of the——" Grace was about to say freshman class when the registrar rose and came toward them with outstretched hand.

"My dear Patience!" she exclaimed cordially, "I am so glad you arrived at last. How is your father?"

"Much better, thank you," replied the tall girl. "We still have two nurses, but I think he is out of danger now. I hated to leave him, but he was so worried because I had missed the first two weeks of college, that he insisted I should come on here at once. I arrived last night and went directly to Holland House, but the matron there thought I had given up coming, and the room I engaged by letter had been given to some one else only yesterday morning. She di-

rected me to Wayne Hall, where, by the merest luck, I managed to secure half a room."

During this flow of explanations, delivered in Miss Eliot's crisp, business-like tones, Grace had listened in open amazement. This tall freshman's manner of addressing Miss Sheldon, the dignified registrar, betokened long acquaintance, while the registrar looked as delighted as though she had found a long-lost relative.

"I see you have fallen into good hands," said the registrar, a pleasant smile lighting her rather austere face as she glanced at Grace.

"I am quite sure of that," responded Miss Eliot heartily. "I also brought disaster upon myself." An account of the morning's accident followed.

"I believe you were born to disaster, Patience Eliot," laughed Miss Sheldon.

"I shouldn't be at all surprised," was the dry response.

"Miss Harlowe, I have known Miss Eliot since she was a little girl," explained Miss Sheldon. "I am pleased to know that she is to live at Wayne Hall. I am sure she will be happy there. I understand that the Wayne Hall girls make a very congenial household."

"We try to," said Grace with a frank smile. "My three friends and I have never lived in any other house since our freshman days. Per-

haps Miss Eliot will find her freshman year there as delightful as we found ours."

"My freshman year!" exclaimed Miss Eliot in evident surprise.

"Yes," returned Grace rather blankly. "Aren't you a freshman? I don't know why I thought so, but I supposed, of course, that——" She paused irresolutely.

Miss Sheldon and the tall girl exchanged openly smiling glances, then the latter turned toward Grace almost apologetically. "I am a freshman in one sense," she said. "I have never before been to college, but as far as work goes I studied with my father and was lucky enough to pass up the freshman year. I ran down here last June to talk things over and find where I stood. I'm a sophomore, if you please."

Grace burst into merry laughter. "Won't the girls be surprised!" she exclaimed. "We all thought you were a freshman."

"I hadn't stopped to think of what any one else thought of me," said Patience, "or I might have enlightened the girls at the breakfast table as to my superior sophomore estate. They'll find out soon enough. I have a great mind to let them stumble upon the truth gradually."

"Oh, do," begged Grace gleefully. "It will be great fun to let matters take their own course."

Miss Sheldon smiled indulgently, but made no comment. She was versed in the ways of college girls. She, too, had been a student at Overton.

"I should like to stay longer, Miss Sheldon, but I know you are very busy." Patience rose at last to go, Grace following her example. "Now that I have come to headquarters, been identified, had my thumb marks registered and become a unit in this great and glorious organization," went on the tall girl calmly, "I shall feel free to go forth and replace Mrs. Elwood's demolished china. I should like to put the new set on the washstand before I tell her of the accident. Good-bye, Miss Sheldon." She held out her hand. "May I come to see you soon?"

"You know you will always be welcome, my dear."

"I wish you wouldn't tell even your roommate that I am a sophomore," said Patience Eliot as they left the campus and turned into College Street.

"I won't," promised Grace. "I'll be a positive clam. But what about your roommate? She will be sure to find out first, and then——" Remembering Patience Eliot's roommate Grace broke off suddenly.

"And then what?" asked the tall girl with disconcerting directness.

"Nothing," murmured Grace.

"Then we don't need to become alarmed, do we?" was the next question.

"No, not in the least," said Grace, smiling faintly. She was trying to decide whether or not she ought even to intimate to the tall, matter-of-fact girl, whom she already liked, that Kathleen West was likely to prove a disappointment in the way of a roommate.

But the decision was not left to her, for Patience Eliot said with calm amusement in her tones: "I have a better idea of what you are thinking than you know. All I have to say is, don't waste a minute worrying over me. Patience Eliot will take care of herself regardless of who her roommate may be."

CHAPTER IV

PATIENCE PROMISES TO STAND BY

FOR the next three days Patience Eliot passed successfully for a freshman. Then came the sudden dismaying rumor that she was registered in the sophomore theme class. A little later it was announced positively that she had passed up freshman French. The truth suddenly burst upon certain members of the sophomore class who had selected Miss Eliot as a splendid subject for sophomore grinds, when, on the occasion of their first class meeting, she walked quietly into the class room where it was to be held, and took her place with a cheerful, matter-of-course air that was very disturbing to various abashed sophomores who had planned mischief.

Far from being angry, the astonished sophomores treated the New England girl's mild deception as a joke, and by it she sprang into instant popularity with her class. There were a few disgruntled students who criticized her, but these were so far in the minority that they counted for little. Kathleen West was among this minority. On the evening when the girl from New England had been shown into the

room at the end of the hall, Kathleen had conceived a strong dislike for this calm-faced, independent young woman, whose quiet self-assurance nettled her, and mentally decided that she belonged to the preaching, narrow-minded class of girls who made life a burden for those who did not live up to a certain impossible standard. Patience Eliot had been even less favorably impressed with the newspaper girl. "She has a frightful temper," had been her mental observation, "and looks the reverse of agreeable." Aside from a brief exchange of conversation, silence had reigned in the room, and remembering the happy faces of the girls she had seen at the breakfast table that morning, Patience had felt not wholly pleased with her new quarters and not a little lonely.

The incident of the broken china had been fortunate in that it had brought about a friendly, informal meeting between Grace and herself. After that everything had glided smoothly along. Patience and Grace received an invitation to take dinner with Miss Sheldon the following Sunday, and this occasion served to strengthen the New England girl's favorable impression of Grace to such an extent that by the end of the week the knot of friendship between them had been firmly tied.

From the moment of Kathleen West's discov-

ery that her roommate was fast becoming friendly with the very girls she affected to despise, she adopted an aggressive manner toward the New England girl which the latter was quick to perceive and tactfully ignore. Patience had an unusually keen insight into character, and she had made up her mind not to get beyond the point of exchanging common civilities with the disgruntled young woman who seemed determined to go through college with her eyes tightly closed to her own interests.

That the newspaper girl possessed a fondness for study and never neglected her lessons was a point in her favor, in Patience's eyes. As the daughter of a well-known man of letters she had inherited her father's love of study and an appreciation of that same love in others. She frequently smiled at the clever, caustic remarks the strange, moody girl was wont to make about everything and everybody, and occasionally she surprised even Kathleen herself by her ready appreciation of the themes the latter wrote.

It was several weeks before the two young women even became accustomed to each other. During that time Kathleen learned that Patience was proof against her aggressiveness, and not half so narrow-minded as she had thought; while Patience discovered, to her dismay, that in spite of Kathleen's undoubted wit

and brilliancy, she disliked her rather more, if anything, than on first acquaintance.

"I feel quite conscience-stricken over it," she confided to Grace one afternoon as they started down College Street for a short walk before dinner. "I wouldn't tell any one else, Grace, but I simply can't like Miss West. I've tried, and I can't. I am equally sure she doesn't like me. Imagine us sharing the intimacy of one room, and at the same time disliking each other cordially. I suppose there isn't the slightest chance for me to make a change this year. Besides, I don't wish to leave Wayne Hall."

"Oh, you mustn't think of leaving Wayne Hall!" exclaimed Grace in dismay. "I am so sorry about Miss West. She is a peculiar girl. None of the girls here pretend to understand her. When first she came here as a freshman she was friendly enough with us. Then something occurred for which we were not to blame, or rather, we did not know that Miss West considered us at fault," corrected Grace conscientiously. "At any rate, she suddenly began to avoid us. For a long time we didn't know the reason." Grace paused for an instant. "By the time we found out, it was too late. Other things had happened. I can't really tell you much about that part of it," she added, reddening, "but in fairness to myself and my

friends I will say that we were not to blame for what followed. There, that isn't very definite, is it? But I know you won't ask any questions."

"Not one," returned Patience gravely. "I knew, of course, that relations between you two were strained, but hadn't the slightest idea of the cause of it all. I believe I understand something of the situation now."

They tramped along in silence for a time. Grace was thinking almost resentfully that even in her senior year she seemed unable to free herself from a sense of responsibility toward Kathleen West. Her great affection for Mabel Ashe had undoubtedly been at the bottom of it, but, deep in her heart, Grace knew that had there been no Mabel to pave the way for Kathleen, she would have done whatever lay in her power to help this strange girl, who had no conception of, and was not likely ever to imbibe, that intangible and yet wholly necessary principle, college spirit. She wondered a little sadly why Mabel Ashe had not written her. Could it be possible that Mabel had heard unkind, untruthful tales of her from the newspaper girl? Grace impatiently accused herself of being suspicious and tried to shake off the impression.

While she was pursuing this uncomfortable train of thought, Patience Eliot was covertly

watching her companion's face. The expression she saw there evidently did not please her, and with a slightly determined set of her lips and a gleam of sudden purpose in her frank eyes, she promised herself that, beginning that very day, she would try to study Kathleen from an entirely different standpoint than heretofore. Laying her hand on Grace's shoulder she said warmly: "Don't worry, Grace. I will take back what I said about leaving Wayne Hall. I'm going to stay there until the last day of my sophomore year, at least. And as long as I stay I shall no doubt go on rooming with Miss West. There, does that make you feel better?"

"It is positively noble in you to say that, Patience," responded Grace gratefully. "I know you are bound to be put to endless personal inconvenience on account of it. I feel peculiarly responsible for Miss West, because I promised Mabel Ashe, who knows her, that I would help her to like college. I have told you all about Mabel before. Next to Anne and Miriam, Mabel was my best friend here at Overton. I can't begin to tell you how I missed her last year. When Miss West first came to Overton I thought it would be perfectly splendid to have a real newspaper reporter with us, and because she was Mabel's friend I felt doubly sure of liking her.

"Mabel had sent me a telegram asking me to go to the station to meet her. Anne and I didn't allow any grass to grow under our feet. We rushed off post haste to the station. Confidentially, we were dreadfully disappointed in her. She was not in the least the sort of girl that I had expected to meet. I suppose I entertained an almost exaggerated idea of what a newspaper woman should be. I've always enjoyed reading stories about clever women who covered important assignments and made good on newspapers. You know the kind of stories I mean."

Patience nodded understandingly. "Real people are never like people in books," she commented. "Usually the real folks do far more startling things than the book people ever thought of doing."

"I know it," agreed Grace, with a rueful smile. "Suppose I say what you just said happens to apply to this case, and leave the rest to your imagination."

"Very neatly put," was Patience's grim answer. "My imagination is quite equal to the strain. As her roommate, I can draw upon fact rather than imagination."

"Yet I have a curious feeling that you are going to succeed where we have failed. You are so strong and capable and——" Grace's earnest eyes looked their confidence in Patience, as

she groped for the word that would describe her friend. "I can't think of the right word now, but you understand me. What I mean is that once you had made up your mind to do something, you'd do it or die."

" 'Tis the blood of my Revolutionary ancestors that spurs me on to deeds of might," declaimed Patience. "Don't give up the ship—girl, I mean," she finished humorously.

"That looks like Miss West just ahead of us!" exclaimed Grace. "She came from that house at the end of the row. A crowd of freshmen live there and one of them seems to be a particular friend of hers."

"You mean Miss Rawle?" replied Patience. "I have named her my daily affliction. She haunts Wayne Hall with a persistency worthy of a better cause. She adores Miss West, and tells me all about it while she is waiting for Kathleen, who, I suspect, runs away from her more than once. She refers to little Miss Rawle as 'my crush,' but her tone is unpleasantly sarcastic. Miss Rawle honestly admires Miss West and seems to have a great deal of faith in her ability to write. Sometimes Kathleen is the soul of hospitality. At other times she barely responds to Miss Rawle's timid remarks. When she behaves in that fashion I feel tempted to give her a good shaking. More than once I

have seen Miss Rawle say good night when she looked ready to cry."

"I wish I knew how to get hold of Kathleen," said Grace, looking troubled. "It is simply a case of good material going to waste, isn't it?"

Patience shrugged her square shoulders. "I had a glimmer of hope that, once she and I became accustomed to each other, we might at least dwell together in peace. So far peace has been maintained by great effort on my part. How much longer it will endure is a question."

At the door of Wayne Hall Grace paused irresolutely. "Oh, dear!" she exclaimed, "I forgot to stop at the stationer's, and I need a lot of little things, too. I must go back and get them. Will you come with me, Patience?"

Patience shook her head. "I want to read for a few minutes before dinner. It is almost the only time I have to read for pleasure. You won't care if I go on upstairs, will you, Grace?"

"Of course not. I wish I didn't have to go. I'll see you at dinner."

Grace hurried down the walk on her errand, while Patience went on into the house and to her room.

CHAPTER V

A DECLARATION OF WAR

THE October twilight had fallen before the two girls finished their walk. When Patience opened her door she did not at first glance see the huddled figure crouched close to the window. A sound, half sob, half sigh, caused her to cross the room in an instant.

"Who are you, and what is the trouble?" were her blunt questions.

The girl burrowed her face in her arm and made no answer.

"Get up!" commanded Patience, an imperative note in her voice that caused the girl to half struggle to her feet, then sink sobbing to her old position.

"This won't do at all," remonstrated Patience. "You mustn't sit here. Stop crying instantly." She purposely made her voice coldly unsympathetic with a view toward summoning the weeper's pride to her aid.

It had the desired effect. The girl rose from the floor and stumbled toward the door, her head still hidden on her arm.

With a cry of, "Why, it is Miss Rawle!" Patience sprang forward and caught the girl by

the hand. "You poor child! What has happened to you to make you cry so?"

"Please don't sympathize with me, Miss Eliot, or I'll break down and cry again. It isn't anything in particular. I'm just a silly goose, that's all. Miss West promised to be here this afternoon, and I've been waiting for her ever since half-past four. I suppose she forgot all about it." Miss Rawle made a valiant attempt to smile. "Please tell her I was here, and—and was very sorry I didn't see her." Her lip quivered like that of a grieved child.

Patience turned on the light, then went over to where Miss Rawle stood. "Do you wish me to give you a piece of good advice?" she asked with abrupt frankness, placing her hand on the girl's shoulder.

"Yes," responded Miss Rawle in a half-hearted manner.

"Then don't leave any word for Miss West, and don't put yourself within speaking distance of her for at least a week."

"But—I can't do that. She wouldn't understand——"

"All the better for you," cut in Patience's crisp voice. "You are very fond of Miss West, aren't you?"

Miss Rawle nodded. "She is so bright and clever and says such smart things, and can

write. I adore cleverness. I'm not a bit clever. I work dreadfully hard to keep up in my classes. But Kathleen is actually brilliant, and, besides, she took me to the sophomore reception."

The tall girl listened gravely to this enthusiastic tribute to her captious roommate. "Very good reasons," she agreed. "Still, I wish you would try to do what I just suggested. Miss West is like a great many other clever people, she doesn't appreciate what is easily won."

A deep flush overspread Miss Rawle's face. An angry light leaped into her blue eyes. Then, meeting Patience's calm glance, she said slowly, "Do you mean that I force myself upon her?"

"In a measure, yes," was the cool reply. "You are very fond of her and she knows it, consequently she doesn't value your friendship half as highly as though she weren't sure of it. You must meet her on her own ground, and make her realize that you are of as much importance in the world as she. It may be hard at first, but it will be best for both of you. Miss West stands in need of a friend, and I am sure you would be loyal to her."

"How nice in you to say so," returned Miss Rawle, brightening. "I thought I was angry with you for saying what you did about my forcing myself upon Kathleen, but I'm not. I am going straight home, now, and I'll do as you

say. Would you mind if I were to come and see you some time, and won't you take luncheon with me some day at Vinton's?"

Patience smilingly acquiesced to both eager requests, and little Miss Rawle descended the steps of Wayne Hall and set off for Livingston Hall, where she lived, looking anything but sorrowful.

"I'll try her way," she planned as she sped along through the soft fall darkness. "It is worth trying. But I wonder what made her say that Kathleen stood in need of a friend."

After Miss Rawle had departed, armed and equipped with her newly-born independence, Patience smiled whimsically to herself as she brushed her long, fair hair, rebraided it and wound it about her head. It was a coiffure she had recently adopted at Elfreda's suggestion, and it went far toward softening the severe outline of her face. "I didn't come to college to play mentor to any one," she said, half aloud, "nor to give advice, for that matter. Perhaps I should not have told Miss Rawle to stay away from Kathleen. It isn't really any of my business. Wouldn't she be angry if she knew? Shall I tell her? No, I don't believe I will. If, during a season of adoration, Miss Rawle is indiscreet enough to tell her, then that is a different matter. But I don't believe she will."

Patience had just finished doing her hair when the object of her monologue appeared in the door and after a quick survey of the room stepped inside.

"Was Miss Rawle here?" she asked abruptly.

"Yes," answered Patience, noncommittally.

"I'm glad I wasn't. She is such a frightful bore. What did she say?"

"She asked me to tell you she was here and was very sorry she missed you."

"I am very glad I missed her," declared Kathleen, with a shrug. "Deliver me from 'crushes' of her sort, at least. There are several girls in the freshman class who look rather interesting, but they are evidently not anxious to know me," she added, her face darkening.

"Whose fault is it?" asked Patience pointedly.

"Not mine," retorted Kathleen with asperity. Then, turning upon Patience, she said in a voice shaking with sudden anger: "What do you mean by asking me such a question? I did not realize the insult it contained or I wouldn't have answered you."

"I did not intend to be insulting," said Patience, "but candidly I think you are to blame for whatever attitude the girls here maintain toward you. Then, again, you do not value your friends. For instance, there is little Miss Rawle

who is really fond of you. Yet you are continually running away from her. If I were Miss Rawle I would let you severely alone; you don't deserve her friendship. You don't and can't appreciate it."

Kathleen stared at Patience in angry amazement. No one had ever before spoken to her quite so plainly. Then she found her voice.

"I think you are not only insulting, but impertinent and meddlesome as well. I suppose Miss Rawle complained to you because I didn't keep my engagement with her and you thought it your duty to take me to task for it. Understand, once and for all, you are not to interfere in my affairs. I shall answer to no one for my actions. I did not choose you for a roommate. You are the last girl I would choose. I won't stand being criticized and lectured at every turn. Save your criticisms for those who are silly enough to take them seriously, but please don't imagine for an instant that what you may think or say carries the slightest weight with me."

Before Patience could frame a reply the newspaper girl had rushed from the room, slamming the door with a vehemence that fairly shook the walls.

She did not return to the room until after dinner, and then only long enough to slip into her

coat and hat. During that brief moment she neither spoke to nor noticed Patience, who went quietly on with her studying as though nothing had happened. Kathleen's outburst had made no impression upon this calm-faced girl, but Patience's all too truthful words had sunk deeper into the newspaper girl's mind than she cared to admit.

CHAPTER VI

A FACE TO FACE TALK

FOR a week at least Alice Rawle stayed religiously away from Wayne Hall and her idol, during which time Kathleen went serenely about her business, apparently undisturbed by the lull in the attentions of her one "crush." Then a certain sharp-eyed sophomore noted the fact and, happening to run across the newspaper girl in the gymnasium one afternoon, remarked laughingly, "I hear your little friend, Miss Rawle, has transferred her allegiance to Miss Eliot."

"What utter nonsense," declared Kathleen. Yet she frowned her displeasure at the intimation, and immediately held Patience responsible for Miss Rawle's deflection. She decided to look into the matter that very afternoon and found time to stop and see Alice on her way home from her class. She rang the bell at Livingston Hall a little before five o'clock, only to find that Miss Rawle had not yet come in. The newspaper girl turned her steps toward Wayne Hall, feeling slightly disappointed and vexed. Arrived at the Hall, she slipped upstairs with the cat-like quiet and ease that always character-

ized her movements. At the door of her room she paused for a moment, listening to the sound of voices that came from within. Then, with a vehement exclamation, she flung wide the door and darted into the room.

"Whatever you have to say of me you can say in my presence," she stormed. "Do you hear? I said, 'In my presence,'" she repeated, her voice rising.

The two astonished occupants of the room regarded the angry girl in silent astonishment. Then the tension of the moment relaxed, and Alice Rawle found her voice. "You are right," she said to Kathleen, with a scornful little gesture. "We were talking of you. Evidently you heard what we said. I am glad you did. Until this moment I liked you better than any other girl in Overton. If you had come sooner, you would have heard me say so. But now I think you are unjust and contemptible and I shall never speak to you again." Turning to Patience, who had stood impassive during this outburst, she said with sudden penitence: "I'm sorry I lost my temper. I will come again to see you at some other time. Good-bye."

As the door closed on Alice, Kathleen confronted Patience with blazing eyes. "It is all your fault," she accused wildly. "I hate you! You are one of the superior, narrow-minded sort

of girls who will excuse nothing. You imagine yourself to be perfect, but you can always discover faults in others. You don't like me. I know it. I have those dear friends of yours to thank for it, too. I know that Miss Harlowe has taken particular pains to strengthen your first impression of me, which wasn't favorable. It is very unfortunate that we are obliged to room together. I suppose it is useless to ask you to mind your own business and let me alone."

Kathleen walked moodily to the window and stood looking out, her favorite attitude when greatly disturbed in spirit. Crossing swiftly to where the newspaper girl stood, Patience laid two firm hands on Kathleen's shoulders. She whirled at the touch, her eyes flashing.

"That's right," commented Patience. "I want you to look at me. The time has come for you and me to have an understanding. I've been putting off the evil day, and there have been times when I have even dreamed that we might dispense with it altogether. But now we must face it. I am going to tell you exactly what I think of you and why I think it, and you are going to perform the same kind office for me. Will you please begin?"

Kathleen's face set in sullen lines. "You know what I think of you," she muttered. "I

just finished telling you. I told you last week, too."

"So you did," smiled Patience, "but surely you must think other uncomplimentary things of me."

"Will you kindly take your hands off my shoulders and attend to your own affairs?" Kathleen's voice choked with renewed anger.

Patience's hands dropped to her sides. "Very well. If you haven't anything further to say on the subject of my short-comings, I'll proceed to yours," was her brisk declaration.

"I won't listen to you," cried Kathleen passionately. "I won't stay here and allow you to insult me."

She sprang toward the door, but Patience, divining her intention, turned the key in the lock and calmly pocketed it. "Don't be a goose," she advised. "You are too clever to be so childish. You are deliberately trying to shut yourself out of all the pleasant part of college by going about with a grievance on your shoulder. If you weren't so clever I shouldn't take the trouble to say what I think. Why, you could be one of the foremost girls in the sophomore class if you wished."

"I haven't seen any particular indication of admiration on the part of my class," sneered Kathleen.

"You haven't given your class cause to admire you, have you?" asked Patience imperturbably.

Sheer inability to reply to this unwelcome assertion held Kathleen silent.

"Please don't misunderstand me," went on Patience. "I know I have no right to criticize you, but as your roommate, I feel a certain interest in your welfare."

"Very kind in you, I am sure," muttered Kathleen sarcastically.

Unmindful of the sarcasm, Patience continued: "I believe your chief trouble lies in the fact that newspaper standards are so different from those of a college. On a newspaper it is a case of get the story and no questions asked. It isn't honor that counts. It is shrewdness, determination, dogged persistence, hardness of head, and deafness to personal appeal that wins the day."

A curious light leaped into the other girl's eyes. "How do you happen to know so much about what counts on a newspaper?" she questioned sharply.

"Because my father edited one for years. All the newspaper folks know James Merton Eliot. You must have heard of him," replied Patience with grim satisfaction.

"You don't mean it! I never dreamed you

could be his daughter," gasped Kathleen, regarding her tall roommate with positive awe. Then she said, almost humbly: "Say what you like to me. I'll listen to it, no matter how much it hurts."

"But I don't wish to hurt you," remonstrated Patience, "nor to preach. I do wish you to know, however, that I am quite familiar with the inside workings of a newspaper. I have haunted Father's office since I was a little girl. I was bitterly resentful of being packed off to a preparatory school when I yearned to be a reporter. Father didn't resign his editorship of a Boston paper until last year. He overworked and has been very ill since then. That is the reason I was not here when college opened. I waited until I was sure he was really convalescent. Had my affairs shaped themselves differently, you would not now be obliged to endure me as a roommate."

Kathleen continued to survey Patience with wondering eyes. It was simply incredible that this brusque, matter-of-fact young woman whom she had held in secret contempt should be the daughter of a man whose name was known and honored throughout the newspaper world. Sheer astonishment tied her tongue.

"I would have told you in the beginning," continued Patience, "but I did not wish to

travel on my father's passport. When I saw what an unfavorable impression I had made on you I was tempted to tell you. It would at least have given me a certain prestige in your eyes. Then I decided never to tell you. But to-day it seemed the only way. None of the girls know it. Miss Sheldon and Miss Wilder know. They are personal friends of Father's."

"If I had only known when first you came to Wayne Hall," was Kathleen's regretful cry.

"But I didn't wish you to know," returned Patience. "I wished you to like me for myself, and you wouldn't. You thought me pedantic and narrow-minded, and set me down as a typical New England woman of the grim, uncompromising type, who boasts of her Puritan ancestry, and goes through life ungracious and forbidding. I don't believe I am pedantic or narrow-minded or small-souled, but I have plenty of other faults, as you'll learn before the year is over. I meant what I said about your standing in your own light. You'll have to learn the difference between college and newspaper standards, too."

Kathleen's face reddened. She understood all that the sharp criticism implied. "I know I haven't lived up to——" she began.

Patience shook her head vigorously. "Don't tell me," she said. "Just decide that hereafter

you are going to cultivate Overton as your Alma Mater for all you're worth. You'll find you can adapt Overton standards to your paper more successfully than you can adapt newspaper tactics here. At least it will do no harm to try out my suggestion and see how far it will carry you."

"I will try," responded Kathleen with a suddenness that surprised even herself. "Only," her eyes grew resentful, "you mustn't expect me to be an angel all in a twinkling, or even like certain girls you and I know. I can't, and that settles it."

"I shall have no expectations in the matter," smiled Patience. "Your likes and dislikes concern no one save yourself. Please forgive me for locking the door and speaking so candidly."

Patience stepped to the door and unlocked it. Kathleen took an uncertain step forward, wavered, then, advancing almost timidly, held out her hand.

"Will you shake hands?" she asked. "I am glad you did it, and I am going to be different—if I can," she added moodily.

"Be fair to yourself and give the clever, capable Kathleen West a chance," was the New England girl's advice. "This little talk of ours has served to clear the atmosphere of this room. Let us be friends and keep it clear."

"I will try," Kathleen repeated, but Patience was obliged to confess to herself that she had very little faith in the newspaper girl's promise. She felt that the fact that James Merton Eliot was her father had made far more impression upon Kathleen than had her little lecture on standards.

CHAPTER VII

WHEN FRIENDS FALL OUT

"WHAT has happened to the Semper Fidelis Club? Did such a worthy organization ever exist, or did I merely dream?" inquired Arline Thayer, walking suddenly into the living room at Wayne Hall one evening, where Grace sat idly turning the pages of a magazine, at the same time trying to decide the best possible way of spending her evening.

"Oh, Arline!" she exclaimed. "I am so glad you came. You are just in time. I was trying to decide what I had better do this evening. For a wonder, I haven't a line of studying to worry me. But there are so many other things I ought and wish to do. My correspondence is fast going to rack and ruin, and I owe at least a dozen calls, the drop-in-in-the-evening kind. Anne wants me to go for a walk, and Elfreda and Miriam are determined I shall go to see 'Les Miserables' at the motion picture theatre on Main Street. They saw 'The Taming of the Shrew' one evening last week, and came home ardent moving picture fans."

"I saw it, too," replied Arline. "It was won-

derfully well acted, and the photography and arrangement of the scenes were excellent. Suppose we gather the club in, and go to see 'Les Miserables' in a body?"

"I could please the populace and myself at the same time by taking your advice, couldn't I?" Grace cast a laughing glance toward Arline.

"Of course you could," urged Arline. "Don't stand upon the order of your going, but go at once and tell Elfreda and Miriam what we propose doing. Anne can take her walk some other time, and your letters can languish unanswered a little longer. I'm going to hurry back to Morton House for Ruth and Gertrude. We will pick up the Emerson twins on our way here, and also Elizabeth Wade and Marian. You can ask Emma and the others."

"What about Patience?" asked Grace.

"By all means ask her. We want her in the club, too. The only objection is that she will be the thirteenth member. That is the reason I haven't proposed her name before this. We shall be obliged to ask some one else to make fourteen."

"Arline," Grace's tone caused her friend to eye her sharply, "do you suppose we ought to ask Kathleen West to join our club?"

"No." Arline's blue eyes grew resentful. Her

"no" was coldly incisive. "If she is asked to join the club, I shall immediately resign."

Grace looked her surprise at this uncompromising statement. She had not reckoned on Arline's opposition to an idea which had been steadily forcing itself upon her since the beginning of her senior year. Ever since the last days of her junior year, when Alberta Wicks had made plain what seemed obscure in the case of Kathleen West, Grace had experienced a generous desire to recompense the newspaper girl for the fancied slight she had received at their hands.

Toward Grace and her three friends Kathleen still preserved the same antagonistic attitude. So far Grace had been unable to discover any way in which at least a semblance of friendly relations might be established. The idea of asking Kathleen to join the club had suddenly occurred to her, and in her usual impetuous fashion she had given voice to it. Arline's sharp "no" was in the nature of a dash of cold water to impulsive Grace, and she now regarded her friend with troubled eyes.

"Why are you so bitter against Kathleen?" she asked. "You have no personal grievance against her, have you?"

"You know perfectly well that she tried to prevent the club from giving the bazaar, and

you know of other contemptible things she has done. A girl who would work directly against Semper Fidelis on the outside, wouldn't make a particularly desirable member. At least that is my opinion." Arline compressed her lips, looking very dignified.

"I didn't dream you felt so opposed to her," said Grace quietly. "Still, it will do no particular hurt to ask her to go with us to-night. I hate to go to her room to invite Patience and leave her out. Besides, I think Patience would wish her to go. Confidentially, Arline, she and Patience had some sort of understanding the other day and now they appear to be almost friends."

"I'm sorry, Grace, but I won't go to-night if you invite Miss West. I am willing to do almost anything else to please you, but I simply can't endure her, and I don't intend to have my evening spoiled. I should prefer not to go. After all, I don't know that it matters much whether I go or not." With a gesture of superb indifference Arline rose to depart.

Grace was at her side in an instant. "Daffydowndilly Thayer, you know you care," she smiled, putting her finger under Arline's chin. "You are not half as hard-hearted as you would have me think."

Arline drew away from her with a pettish little shrug. "You can't make me feel differently

about her, Grace. Please don't try. If she goes to-night, I shan't. You may choose between us. If you are afraid of offending her by asking Patience to go and leaving her out, then I will invite Patience to go."

"I am not afraid to ask Patience to go with us in Miss West's presence," was Grace's proud response, "although I believe it would be kinder not to ask either of them as long as they appear to be friends. Patience wouldn't feel hurt or slighted, and that would make the party strictly Semper Fidelis." Grace spoke evenly, although there was a note of constraint in her voice. "But, please, don't misinterpret my feeling in the matter as one of fear."

Arline made no answer, and the two girls left the living room in silence.

"I'll see you in half an hour," was Arline's sole comment.

"Shall we meet here?" asked Grace. "It is nearer the theatre and quite central."

"Very well." Arline walked to the hall door, her golden head held very high. Grace took a half step toward her, hesitated, then turned and walked quietly up the stairs to carry the invitation to the Semper Fidelis girls.

She stopped first at the door of Emma Dean's room. Emma answered her knock with a cheerful "Come in."

"As a loyal member of Semper Fidelis it is your duty to turn out with your sisters and attend a motion picture show," declaimed Grace from the threshold.

"No urging is necessary," responded Emma, rising from her chair and going to the closet for her wraps. "I am nothing if not loyal, and I adore picture shows."

"Meet me in the living room in five minutes, then. I must see Patience," returned Grace, but she could not help hoping as she walked down the hall that she would find Patience alone.

CHAPTER VIII

A LEAF FROM THE PAST

AT Patience's door she paused. It stood partly open, and peeping in she saw that her friend was alone. Rapping softly, she announced with a laugh, "The Honorable Grace Harlowe."

"Enter without further ceremony," was the quick reply. "To what do I owe my good fortune?"

"To the absence of your roommate," answered Grace dryly. "Where is she?"

"At the library. She left the house directly after dinner to look up a number of references. She is infinitely more industrious than I."

"The Semper Fidelis crowd are going down to that new motion picture theatre to see 'Les Miserables.' We want you to go with us," invited Grace, looking relieved at having been able to deliver the invitation so easily.

"Let me think. Is there any reason why I can't go? I have a hazy recollection of having something else on hand to-night, but I can't remember what it is."

"Is it anything about lessons?" asked Grace.

"No." Patience glanced perplexedly about

her. "I can't recall it. It isn't anything of importance or I certainly would have no difficulty in remembering it. Perhaps it will come to me suddenly."

"I must make the round of the house and ask the other girls. Be ready and downstairs within the next fifteen minutes."

By the time Grace had collected the Semper Fidelis girls of Wayne Hall, Arline had returned with the other members of the club, and the party set out for the theatre. Grace walked with Anne and Patience, who, unable to remember any other engagement, had dismissed the disturbing thought from her mind and prepared to enjoy her evening.

At the entrance of the theatre, the party halted for a moment while Arline bought the tickets. Grace looked interestedly about her. Even in quiet, staid old Overton she derived an active pleasure from scanning the faces of the passersby. She tried to read their thoughts from their expressions, and her habit of observation had on more than one occasion proved of value to her.

"All right," called Arline, holding up the tickets. "Come on."

Grace turned her eyes toward Arline, then some unaccountable influence caused her to turn her head and glance again in the

direction of the street. A roughly-dressed man had stopped on the sidewalk directly in front of the theatre to stare at one of the gayly colored lithographs. Grace stopped short, seized with a peculiar feeling of apprehension. Why was the face of this man so familiar to her? Surely she had seen it somewhere under decidedly unpleasant circumstances. Was it at Overton she had seen him? No, it was further back than that.

During the first part of Hugo's famous novel, which had been filmed to perfection, Grace was obsessed with the question: "Where have I seen him?" The stranger's face haunted her. It was a low-browed, sullen face. She could not keep her mind on the story that was being unfolded on the screen. She watched the ill-fated Jean Valjean being led off to prison for stealing a loaf of bread almost without seeing him. It was not until the scene where, bruised in spirit and prison-warped, Jean steals the good priest's candlesticks and makes off with them, that full remembrance came to Grace. Now she knew why that face was strangely familiar. The man she had seen was none other than "Larry, the Locksmith." In her mind's eye Grace saw him sitting in the court room with humped shoulders, his eyes bent fiercely upon her, as she related what she had seen with her face pressed close to

the window pane of the haunted house. It had all happened during her senior year at high school. To Grace it seemed but yesterday since she had given the testimony that sent Henry Hammond's accomplice to prison for a term of seven years in the state penitentiary. Seven years! It had been only four years since that memorable occasion. Perhaps the man had been released earlier for good behavior, or perhaps—Grace's heart beat a trifle faster—he had escaped.

She paid but scant attention to the rest of the performance, and when Jean had died in the arms of his devoted foster daughter, the lights had appeared, and the crowd began filing out of the theatre, she scanned it eagerly. There was no sign of the disturbing face of "Larry, the Locksmith."

The little company of girls made their way to the street, discussing the merits of the various actors who had portrayed so admirably the roles assigned to them. Arline, feeling rather ashamed of her brusque refusal to countenance Kathleen West as a possible member of the club, slipped her arm through Grace's, saying contritely, "I am awfully sorry I was so cross, Grace."

Grace, whose mind was still fully occupied with the thought of the man she had good reason to recognize, did not answer. Arline glanced

reproachfully at her, then withdrew her arm from Grace's with an offended suddenness that caused Grace to cry apologetically: "Please pardon me, Arline. What did you say?"

Arline, however, was now thoroughly incensed. She had apologized, and Grace had not even taken the trouble to listen. Without answering, save by an angry flash of her blue eyes, she walked on rapidly, overtaking the Emerson twins, who were heading the little procession. Grace sprang impulsively forward. Then, as Arline slipped between the twins, laughingly taking hold of an arm of each, Grace fell back, deciding that she would say nothing. She would write Arline a note that very night.

True to her resolve, the note was written and sent. At the end of a week she had received no answer. Later she was greeted with a cold "good afternoon" and a stiff little bow when she chanced to encounter Arline on the campus. Remembering Arline's stubborn stand in regard to Ruth during their sophomore year, Grace knew the dainty little girl's resentment to be very real and lasting. She was also reasonably sure that not even Ruth was aware of their estrangement. She wished she had not seen that disturbing face. She wondered if she had been mistaken. No doubt there were men in the world who bore a strong resemblance to "Larry,

the Locksmith." She blamed herself entirely for Arline's withdrawal of friendship. If she had only heard and accepted the apology! It was humiliating indeed to make an earnest apology to unhearing ears.

"It serves you right, Grace Harlowe," she reflected, coming into the living room late one afternoon. "I'm not sorry for you. I hope Arline won't be too haughty at the club meeting to-morrow. It is such a shame. I wanted to propose the 'Famous Fiction' dance as a Semper Fidelis merry-making this year, and I can never talk enthusiastically of it knowing she disapproves. Of course, I'll pretend I don't care, but it hurts, just the same."

With a sigh Grace reached for the evening paper which lay on the library table. She glanced over the headlines without any special interest until a single sentence in large black type caused her to stare, then give voice to a surprised, "I knew it!" The headline read, "Larry, the Locksmith, Still at Large."

Grace sat down heavily in the nearest chair, the newspaper still clutched in one hand. She had not been mistaken. The man for whom the authorities were searching was the man she had seen in front of the moving picture theatre. It was evident that he had very little fear of being recognized in Overton, or he would not have

risked appearing in the streets of the college town. "He must have friends here, who are sheltering him," sprang into her mind, "or he may be passing through the town. The question is, ought I to make my discovery known to the police?"

"Here you are!" called a familiar voice, "I've been looking for you." Patience Eliot entered the living room, and seated herself opposite Grace. "Do you remember my saying when you asked me to go to the theater that I had a faint recollection of having another engagement last night?"

Grace nodded.

"My faint recollection was perfectly correct. I had promised to go for a walk with Kathleen, and consequently she wouldn't speak to me when I came in last night. She wouldn't accept my humble apologies. Just when I thought I was making a little progress with her, too. I am the most unfortunate mortal," sighed Patience. "I know she imagines I did it purposely."

Patience's recital of her woes brought back the subject of Arline's displeasure to Grace's mind, and when, a little later, the two girls went upstairs arm in arm, the important question of whether or not to inform the Overton police of her discovery had slipped, for the time being, from Grace's mind.

CHAPTER IX

A THANKSGIVING INVITATION

"AT last!" exclaimed Grace triumphantly, as she extracted a letter from the Wayne Hall bulletin board addressed to her in Mabel Ashe's unmistakable handwriting. "Oh, I am so glad! I thought she had forgotten me."

"Or had been persuaded to forget you," put in Elfreda Briggs, who had come downstairs to breakfast directly behind Grace.

Grace looked frankly amazed. "How did you know?"

"How do I find out everything I know?" demanded Elfreda. "Don't you suppose I noticed that you were worried about not hearing from Mabel? I could see you thought some one had made mischief."

"Elfreda Briggs, will you please tell me your exact method of deduction!" exclaimed Grace in a half vexed tone. "Your ability for 'seeing things' is positively uncanny."

"There was nothing very uncanny about seeing you look ready to cry every time Mabel's name was mentioned," retorted Elfreda. "We all knew that you hadn't received a letter from

her. Put two and two together, what is the result? Ask me something harder. That's easy."

"I make my bow to you, most observing of all observers," laughed Grace. "I have been worried over not receiving a letter from Mabel, but I hadn't breathed it to any one. Come into the living room before breakfast. No; let us have breakfast first. It is early yet and we shall have time to read the letter afterward in my room. Then Anne and Miriam can hear it, too. Here they come, the slow pokes."

"A dillar, a dollar, a ten-o'clock scholar,
Oh, why did you come so soon?"

chanted Elfreda as Anne, followed by Miriam, appeared at the head of the stairs.

"A ten-minutes-to-eight-o'clock scholar," calmly corrected Miriam. "We are early, but you and Grace are distressingly early. I suppose you found the fabled worm."

"Here it is." Grace held up the letter. "If you are pleasant and respectful to us during breakfast, I will invite you to my room to hear it read."

"Your half of the room," reminded Anne, with emphasis.

"I beg your pardon, my half of the room," corrected Grace. "I might lease your half for the

occasion, then I could turn you out if you proved a disturbing factor."

"But I could refuse to lease my half," declared Anne.

"Then I should be obliged to turn you out, at any rate. I am much stronger than you."

"It sounds like a discussion between the March Hare and the Mad Hatter, doesn't it?" commented Elfreda.

"It has a true Alice in Wonderland tang," agreed Miriam solemnly. "In the meantime I am growing hungrier. On to breakfast!"

After breakfast, the quartette lost no time in going upstairs to Grace's room to listen to Mabel's letter. Grace opened it, glanced hastily over the first page, then read:

"My Dear Grace:—

"Your faith in me as a correspondent must be shattered by this time. I've intended to write, but my days and nights, too, have been so crowded with work that I have almost forgotten that I am entitled to a little recreation. I'll try not to let it happen again, Grace, dear. I hoped to be able to run down for Thanksgiving, but I am afraid it won't be possible.

"I am doing the clubs now, and there will be so much to write about them during Thanksgiving week that I am afraid I shall have to stay in

town all week. Next week the opera begins, and, oh, joy! I am to help write it—along with my club duties. I went to almost every performance last year and loved them all. Why couldn't you girls make up a party and spend Thanksgiving with me? Isn't that a brilliant idea? I might succeed in getting a day off.

"You might ask Miss West to come with you. Last summer I asked her all about you but could get no particular information regarding you. I saw very little of her during the summer, as she was given a number of important assignments and covered them splendidly. I am sorry to say she is not well liked among the other reporters. They say she is too hard and merciless and that she is terribly unfeeling. Of course, you would hardly see that side of her. I should imagine she must have quite a reputation at Overton by this time, she writes so well. Remember me to her when you see her and deliver my invitation.

"I must stop instantly or lose my train home. Let me hear from you about Thanksgiving. Love to you and Elfreda, Miriam and Anne.

"Yours, as ever,

"Mabel.

"P. S.—I saw Frances last week. She is engaged to be married. More about her when I see you."

"Doesn't it sound exactly as she talks?" smiled Anne.

"I like the Thanksgiving idea," declared Elfreda.

"Of course, we'll go," said Grace, looking questioningly at her friends.

"Of course," repeated Miriam. "But what of Miss West?"

"We might ask Patience to break the news to her," proposed Anne.

"She would be doubly angry with us and say we were afraid of her," said Elfreda. "I'll tell her if you want me to. Nothing she can say will injure my castiron feelings."

"Why not put off the evil day? It is still three weeks until Thanksgiving. We can give her two weeks' notice, as they do in theatrical companies," laughed Anne. "Something might happen in the meantime to make us her bosom friends."

Elfreda giggled derisively. "I'd like to see it happen, then. We could all pursue our favorite phantoms in peace for the rest of our senior year. She is the only disturber left. Mabel says she imagines Kathleen must have quite a reputation at Overton by this time. She has. There isn't a doubt of it."

"Elfreda, be good," admonished Grace, laughing a little.

"Be good, bad child, and let who will be naughty," paraphrased Elfreda in a piping, affected voice.

"That sounded exactly like Hippy, didn't it?" said Miriam.

Grace and Anne nodded.

"We ought to call her Hippy the Second," suggested Anne.

"Good gracious!" gasped Elfreda, pointing a warning finger at the mission clock on the wall. "Half-past eight, and here I sit gayly loitering as though I had nothing else to do. How about chapel this morning? I know you are going, Miriam. How about you, Grace and Anne?"

"I am," said Anne. "Run along and get your wraps. I'll meet you downstairs."

After the three girls had gone off to chapel Grace pulled her favorite chair over to the window and sat down to think things over. First of all came the disturbing problem of the newspaper girl and Mabel's invitation. From the tone of the letter it was evident that Mabel knew nothing of the real state of affairs. Kathleen had maintained a discreet silence. Grace felt dimly that the hard, self-centered girl had taken at least one step in the right direction. She had gone from her freshman year to her paper without telling tales. "I wish she'd hurry and take a whole lot more," Grace reflected moodily, as

she tried to decide whether to write Mabel, asking her to send Kathleen a separate invitation, or to take matters into her own hands and deliver the invitation in person. "I know she won't go if we ask her. I can't settle that to-day. I shall have to see Patience first. She may be able to suggest something."

Grace passed on to the next worry, which was over her misunderstanding with Arline. It was so extremely unfortunate that it should have happened just when they had begun to talk of the Semper Fidelis fancy dress party. She could not carry out her ideas successfully without Arline's co-operation and help. After changing her mind several times, Grace decided to go to Morton House and see Arline.

"It really isn't my place," she ruminated, "but I can't bear to have Arline angry with me."

Last of all, Grace was troubled over the notice she had read in the paper concerning "Larry, the Locksmith." She was certain that the man she had seen in front of the moving picture theatre on the evening of their little theatre party was none other than the robber in whose capture she had been instrumental during her senior year at high school. Should she notify the Overton authorities of her discovery? Perhaps by this time the thief was many miles from Over-

ton. Grace disliked the idea of figuring even privately in the affair. Yet was it right to withhold her knowledge? She could not determine on any particular course of action, and with an impatient sigh at her own lack of decision in the matter she rose from her chair and prepared to go to her first class in anything but a cheerful frame of mind.

CHAPTER X

KATHLEEN'S PROMISE

"NOT in, Miss," was the disappointing information Grace received from the maid who answered the door at Morton House.

"Did she leave word when she would return?" questioned Grace.

"She did not, Miss. She went out with Miss Denton, and didn't say nothin', Miss," was the discouraging reply. "An' will I tell her you was askin' for her, Miss?"

"No; I may come again this evening."

Grace walked slowly down the steps and across the campus. She was not at all sure that she would repeat her call. Dear as was Arline to her, the inevitable reaction had set in. Now Grace's pride whispered to her that there was no real reason why she should humble herself to her too-easily-offended friend. It was Arline, not she, who was in the wrong, she mused resentfully. She was rather glad, after all, that Arline had not been at home.

Glancing undecidedly toward Wayne Hall, then at her watch, Grace set off in the opposite direction at a rapid walk. It was five o'clock.

She would have time to do a little shopping in the Overton stores before they closed. She hurried toward the nearest dry goods store, so intent upon reaching there that she paid little or no attention to the people she passed in the street.

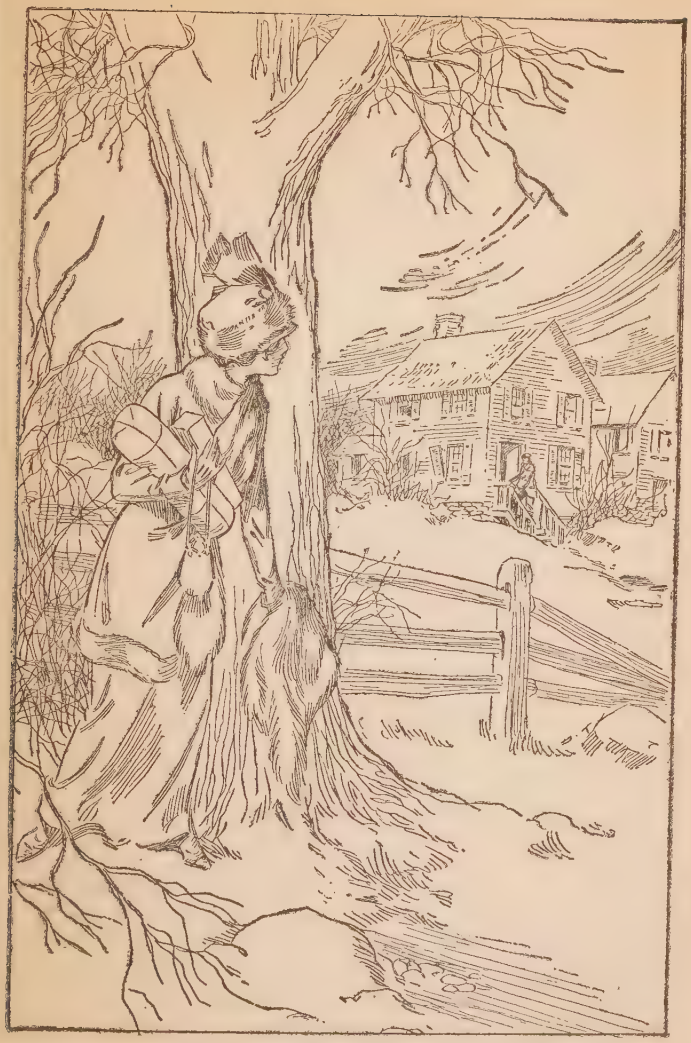
Shopping at this late hour proved a comparatively easy matter. Here and there a belated customer might be seen wandering from counter to counter, but the day's business was practically finished and the saleswomen were busily counting their sales or conversing with their nearest neighbors in low tones. It was ten minutes to six when Grace, inwardly congratulating herself on having been able to do so much shopping in so short a space of time, hurried to the ribbon counter. Blue velvet ribbon was the last item on her list. Then she could go home feeling that her hour had been well spent.

"We're out of that shade of blue velvet ribbon," said the saleswoman, glancing at the sample Grace held out to her. "Everybody's been buying it. It's on order. Have it in next week."

Grace left the store almost on the run and hurried into a shop farther down the street, only to meet with the same disappointing reply. Three blocks farther on was the "French Shop." Grace was sure of finding it there, but was equally sure it would be infinitely more ex-

pensive. Still, she only needed a yard and a half. She was about to enter the shop, when the stocky figure of a man just ahead of her sent a sudden thrill of apprehension through her. There was something unpleasantly familiar about the round shoulders and slouching walk. Forgetting her errand, Grace began following him, keeping not more than twenty feet behind him. As he neared the first cross street the man glanced furtively about him, then, turning into the intersecting street, hurried on, almost at a run. Grace, bent only on seeing the stranger's face, unhesitatingly dogged his footsteps. It was now after six o'clock and growing darker with every moment. Block after block they went, but now Grace kept a distance of a hundred feet or more between herself and the man she was following. She observed rather anxiously that they were nearing the end of Main Street, where the houses were fewer and farther apart.

All at once her quarry stopped short and peered sharply about him through the gathering twilight. Grace strolled on at a leisurely pace, though her heart beat violently. Suppose instead of going on he were to turn and walk toward her. Grace trembled a little. She was drawing altogether too near to him to suit her. She was now positive that he was "Larry, the



Grace Stepped Behind a Tree.

Locksmith." Suddenly the man left the sidewalk and started across a field used in the summer by the small boys of Overton as a playground.

This ended the pursuit as far as Grace was concerned. Stepping behind a tree at the edge of the field she strained her eyes to watch the hulking figure as it moved swiftly on. Then she gave a little exclamation of surprise and triumph. The man was hurrying up the steps of a dingy little house that stood at the end of a row of similar houses which bounded the side of the field directly opposite where she stood. Again consulting her watch, she hesitated. It was almost seven o'clock, and she was at least a mile from Wayne Hall. Anne would wonder at her absence, for she had left no word regarding her call upon Arline. She would be more than likely to miss her dinner. Mrs. Elwood's dinner hour was from half-past five until seven o'clock. She rigidly refused to serve meals to those who came later.

"I can't possibly make it," mused Grace. "I'll run into Vinton's for dinner. All this comes of playing sleuth." She laughed softly at her own remark, then her face grew grave. "What shall I do?" she thought. "It is my duty to tell the authorities, but I promised Father after the class money was found that I'd

never meddle in any such affair again. Yet here I am, on the outskirts of Overton, trailing an escaped convict as though my bread and butter depended upon it. If I could only turn over this affair to some one else, and let him do the rest, I'd be perfectly satisfied."

On the way to Vinton's, Grace reluctantly decided to go in person to the police station and report her discovery to the Chief of Police. "It is only right," she argued. "I will simply tell them the facts and ask them to keep my part in the affair a secret. Then I'll write Father and tell him about it. Perhaps I ought to write him first. But if I wait for his answer it may be too late. I'll go and report my news as soon as I have had my dinner."

Grace did not enjoy her solitary meal. To her, the chief charm of a dinner at Vinton's consisted in eating it with her friends. The smart little restaurant seemed unusually quiet. There were not more than half a dozen persons dining there and only two of the half dozen were Overton girls. It was less than a week until Thanksgiving. It looked as though the girls were practicing economy. This accounted for the slim patronage. Grace ate her dinner with one eye on the door, vainly hoping for the entrance of some one she knew. But no one of her friends appeared, and without waiting for des-

sert she asked the waitress for her check and left the restaurant to go on her disagreeable errand.

It was not a long walk to the police station, and Grace resolved to go there with all possible speed. She wished to be able to dismiss the affair from her mind at the earliest moment. She had reached the cross street on which the station house was situated and was about to turn into it when she almost collided with a young woman who gave a smothered exclamation of annoyance and hurried on. As they came together directly under the rays of the arc light, they could scarcely help recognizing each other.

"I beg your pardon," called Grace after the hurrying figure. Then with a sudden flash of inspiration she called, "Miss West, please wait a minute."

The figure halted, and in the next second Grace confronted the coldly inquiring eyes of the newspaper girl.

"Would you like a real news item for your paper?" she asked impulsively.

Kathleen regarded her with an expression of mingled incredulity and contempt which changed to one of lively displeasure. "Do you believe that I would accept anything from you?" she asked tensely.

"I never thought of that," returned Grace, her color rising. "I was thinking only of the story. Suppose for once we put aside everything personal. I have something to tell you that cannot fail to be of interest to you. Will you forget that I am Grace Harlowe and listen to me?"

Grace's earnestness impressed Kathleen against her will. She hesitated briefly, then said in a low voice, "I will listen to you."

Grace began with the story of the bazaar given on the Thanksgiving afternoon and evening of her senior year in high school. She related briefly the theft of the strong box containing the bazaar money, the unsuccessful attempts of the police to apprehend the thief, the finding of the money by her and Eleanor Savelli and the capture of the thief by the Oakdale police in the haunted house.

Kathleen listened to Grace's rapidly told narrative with growing interest.

When she came to the trial of the thief and his recognition by the officers as "Larry, the Locksmith," Kathleen interrupted excitedly: "Why, that's the man who has escaped from prison. The police of all the large cities have been ordered to watch for him. He is an exceptionally clever criminal who has always escaped until that time in Oakdale. And to think it was you

who were responsible for his capture! I remember the affair. It was my first year on the paper. One of our reporters was sent on to interview this Larry. He laid his capture to the fact of his having been foolish enough to waste his time in a small town."

The newspaper girl had now become eager and animated. Her black eyes gleamed with excitement. "Did you know he had escaped?" she asked.

"Yes," replied Grace. "That is the part I am going to tell you. He is here in Overton. I saw him to-night."

"You saw him?" questioned Kathleen, her eyes wide with astonishment.

Grace nodded. "To-night and one evening last week, too. I wasn't sure then. But to-night I knew him. I followed him to a house on the outskirts of Overton. Then I came back to notify the police. I was on my way to the station when I met you. Don't you imagine it will make a good newspaper story if the police capture him?"

"Great!" exclaimed Kathleen.

"Then come with me to the station house while I make my report. The officers will surely visit the house where he is hiding at once. If they do, you can telegraph your story to-night in time for the first edition in the morning." Grace

had started toward the station house while she was speaking. Kathleen kept close at her side.

"Wait a moment," said Grace, as they ascended the stone steps of the station house. "I almost forgot to tell you. You may use the Oakdale part of the story as you heard it at the time it happened, but my name must not be used in your write-up. I shall, of course, tell the chief the whole story in confidence. Nor do I wish my name used in the story of the man's apprehension, provided he is captured. It ought to make a good story in itself without any reference to me. I wish you to give the chief the first information, then you can truthfully say that you did so when you write it."

"But it won't sound half so exciting as it would with you in it," protested Kathleen. "I need all the data concerning you to make a big story of it."

"I am sorry," declared Grace, "but I promised Father never to become involved in any such affair again. He and Mother would be dreadfully displeased if my name appeared in the newspapers in connection with anything of that sort."

"But I shall use my name," argued Kathleen. "It will be a great help to me in my profession."

"That is different. If I were interested in

newspaper work I shouldn't care, either. I must ask you on your honor not to use my name."

"Very well," answered Kathleen slowly, a curious light leaping into her eyes.

"Thank you," replied Grace, with a friendly smile. "Remember, you are to be the first to tell the news."

CHAPTER XI

KATHLEEN'S GREAT STORY

THE inside of the Overton police station closely resembled that of Oakdale. There was the same style of high desk, the same row of chairs against the wall. Grace hoped the chief would be as easy to approach as was her old friend, Chief Burroughs, at home. There was but one man to be seen, an officer, who sat writing at a small table in one corner of the room.

Kathleen pointed to a half-open door leading into an inner room on which appeared the word "Private."

Grace nodded: then, confidently approaching the officer, asked if the Chief of Police were in. For answer the officer simply motioned with one hand toward the half-open door and went on with his writing.

Chief of Police Ellis glanced up in surprise to see two strange young women standing in the door of his private office.

"Are you the Chief of Police, and may we come into your office for a moment?" questioned Grace politely.

"Come in, by all means," responded the chief

heartily. He was a kindly, middle-age man, whose voice and manner invited confidence. "What can I do for you, young ladies?"

Grace turned to Kathleen, who at once poured forth the story of the appearance of "Larry, the Locksmith" in Overton, of his recognition and of how he had been traced to his hiding place.

At first Chief Ellis had looked incredulous over Kathleen's strange statement.

"How can you be sure he is the man if you have never seen him?" he asked shrewdly. "We can't afford to arrest the wrong man, you know."

Kathleen looked appealingly at Grace.

"You have a daughter in the freshman class, haven't you, Chief?" asked Grace, coming to the newspaper girl's rescue.

"Yes," smiled the chief. "I thought you were Overton girls."

"I am Miss Harlowe of the senior class. This is Miss West, a sophomore. You would not wish your daughter's name to be used in police court news, would you?"

Chief Ellis made an emphatic gesture of negation. "No!" he answered.

"Then I am sure you will keep secret what I am about to tell you." Grace then explained the situation, beginning with the theft of the class

money in Oakdale and ending with her trailing of the thief to his hiding place.

"Well, I declare!" exclaimed the chief. "This is a most remarkable story. However, I am willing to proceed on the strength of it. I'll have three men on the way to capture 'Larry' within the next fifteen minutes. You young ladies had better go home. You can call me on the telephone every half hour until the men come in. I'll keep you posted. If they get him at once, you can get word to your paper to-night," he assured Kathleen. "You must be a pretty smart girl to be going to college and holding a newspaper job at the same time."

Instead of going to Wayne Hall to await word from the chief, the two girls first made arrangements with the telegraph operator at the depot office to wire the story. Kathleen also sent a telegram to her paper. Then they had begun their anxious vigil in the drug store on the corner above the station. An hour later their watch ended. The three officers returned with a snarling, raging prisoner securely handcuffed to one of their number.

"They've captured him!" cried Kathleen, "and now my work begins in earnest." While they had been waiting the newspaper girl had employed the time in writing rapidly in a note book she carried. Grace would have liked to see

what she wrote, but now that the first excitement had passed she felt the old constraint rising between them like a wall.

"Do you care if I don't wait for you in the telegraph office?" asked Grace. "I'll go as far as the door with you. Then I think I had better go on to the Hall. Anne will be worried about me."

Kathleen assented to her plan with a look of immeasurable relief which Grace was not slow to observe, but misconstrued entirely. "I suppose she doesn't wish to be bothered while she sends in her story," was Grace's thought as they left the drug store.

"Good night. I thank you for helping me," said Kathleen in a perfunctory tone as she turned to go into the office. "It is going to be a great story."

"You are very welcome," responded Grace. "Good night, and good luck to you."

Three anxious-faced girls were waiting for Grace in her room, and as she opened the door they pounced upon her in a body.

"Grace, Grace, you naughty girl, where have you been?" cried Anne. "I am sure my hair has turned gray watching for you."

"Yes, give an account of yourself," commanded Elfreda. "Have you no respect for our feelings?"

"Did you imagine no one would miss you?" was Miriam's question.

"I will answer your questions in order," laughed Grace. "I've been out on important business, I have the deepest respect for your feelings, and I know that my friends always miss me."

"Spoken like a soldier and a gentleman," commended Elfreda.

"Which is quite remarkable, considering the fact that I am neither," retorted Grace.

"Grace, what on earth have you been doing?" Anne's face grew sober. There was a subdued excitement in her friend's manner that had not escaped her notice.

"Anne, I cannot tell a lie," returned Grace lightly. "I've been to the police station."

The three girls stared at Grace in amazement.

"Let me see," mumbled Elfreda. "Have I transgressed the law lately, or had any arguments with Grace? This looks suspicious."

"Don't tease me, and promise you will never tell any one what I'm about to say. Hold up your right hands, all of you."

Three right hands were promptly raised.

"Now, I'll tell you about it," declared Grace, "and please bear in mind, before I begin, that venerable old saw about truth being stranger than fiction."

"I knew something startling had happened," declared Anne, when Grace had concluded. "I read it in your face."

"Oh, why wasn't I with you?" was Elfreda's regretful cry. "I have always longed to be concerned in a real melodrama."

Miriam, alone, made no comment. She regarded Grace with an intent gaze that made the latter ask quickly: "What is the matter, Miriam? Don't you approve of my evening's work? I know Father and Mother won't. I must write them to-morrow. Still, I could hardly have done otherwise."

"Of course you couldn't," assured Miriam. "I don't disapprove of what you did. You behaved in true Grace Harlowe fashion."

"Then what made you look at me so strangely?" persisted Grace.

"If I looked at you strangely, then I beg your pardon," smiled Miriam. "It shall not happen again."

Grace smiled faintly, yet her intuition told her that Miriam had purposely turned her question aside.

No account of the recapture of "Larry, the Locksmith" appeared in the morning paper. But in the evening paper a full account was published. Grace had waited apprehensively for the evening edition, which was usually out by

four o'clock in the afternoon. She purchased a paper of the boy who stationed himself daily at the southeast corner of the campus, but purposely delayed opening it until she reached her room. Then almost fearfully she unfolded it, with her three friends looking over her shoulder.

The article began with the flaring headline, "A Desperate Criminal Recaptured." Grace glanced rapidly down the column, then gave an audible murmur of relief. "We aren't mentioned. I shall always have a superlatively good opinion of Chief Ellis. He kept his word to me absolutely. Now I shan't mind writing Father."

"If I had done what you did, I'd insist upon having my name in extra large type, and a portrait and biographical sketch of myself as well," was Elfreda's modest declaration.

"No, you wouldn't, and you know it," contradicted Grace.

"Well, I might not go as far as the portrait, but I should certainly have the biographical sketch."

"I am going to entertain to-night in honor of Grace," announced Miriam. "Shall I invite some of the other girls, or shall we four celebrate in solitary state?"

"Don't invite any outsiders this time," said

Elfreda. "Then we'll be free to talk over our visit to Mabel and anything else we choose."

"There is one person who really ought to be invited," broke in Grace, with conviction. "I mean Kathleen West. Then we can deliver Mabel's invitation to her. I have an idea that she won't refuse to go to New York with us. I hope she will be different from now on. It would be simply splendid to glide peacefully through the rest of one's senior year without a single hitch, wouldn't it?"

"Have you seen her since last night?" asked Anne.

Grace shook her head. "I knocked on her door at noon, but neither she nor Patience was in. I saw Patience afterward, and she said Kathleen had hurried through her luncheon and gone. I don't think Patience knew anything about last night. If she had known, she would have mentioned it. I will try to see Kathleen before dinner."

"You will have to hurry if you do. It is almost time for the dinner bell now," said Elfreda. "You might ask Patience, too."

"All right, I'll go at once. Wait for me. I'll be back in a minute. Then we can go down to dinner together."

Grace knocked lightly upon the door of the end room. It was opened by Kathleen herself.

"Good evening. Won't you come in?" Kathleen's voice was as cold and unfriendly as it had formerly been.

"Good evening." Somewhat puzzled at Kathleen's return to her old, cavalier manner, Grace hardly knew how to proceed. "Did you see today's paper?" she asked, by way of beginning.

"Which paper?" was the brusque inquiry.

"Why, the 'Evening Journal,' of course."

"Oh!" Kathleen's tense expression relaxed a trifle. "Yes, I saw it."

"I am so glad Chief Ellis kept his word. I hope you were on time with your New York story."

"Thank you. It went through nicely!" Kathleen answered in a low tone.

"I just stopped for a moment to ask you to come to a little jollification in Miriam's room to-night. We want Patience, too."

"Miss Eliot went to Westbrook this afternoon. She will not return until to-morrow morning. As for me, I thank you, but it will be impossible for me to come. I have another engagement."

"I am sorry," returned Grace. "Perhaps, under the circumstances, I had better deliver another invitation I have for you at once. I recently received a letter from Miss Ashe inviting us to spend Thanksgiving at her home in New

York. She wished me to extend her invitation to you, also. Mabel does not know——" began Grace. Then her face reddened and she ceased abruptly.

Kathleen, understanding the flush, said dryly: "Miss Ashe is very kind to think of me. However, it is out of the question for me to accept her invitation. I will write her to-night. It is strange she did not write me, too."

"She has been extremely busy," retorted Grace, her face flushing a still deeper red at Kathleen's rudeness. "She invited Miriam, Elfreda and Anne the same way."

"That has nothing to do with me," declared Kathleen. "If you will be so kind, you might say in your letter to her that I will write her within a few days." She kept her face half averted, her eyes refusing to meet Grace's.

"Very well." Grace felt her anger rising. She turned from the door, which closed almost in her face, and went back to her room hurt and indignant.

"Refused and trampled upon as well," declared Elfreda after one glance at Grace's stormy eyes. "Never mind, Grace. I wouldn't let a little thing like that worry me. I wouldn't even think about it."

Grace gave a short laugh. "Of course 'you could see,' " she mimicked.

"I'd be blind if I couldn't," grinned Elfreda. "The look in your eyes tells the story."

"You are right, as usual. She has frozen again. She is icier than ever."

"Where's Patience?" asked Anne.

"Gone to Westbrook. Won't be back until to-morrow. If she were here she might prevail upon Kathleen to behave reasonably."

"We four have been known to enjoy ourselves together without adding to our number," observed Elfreda in a dry tone. "I think I could live without her."

Grace brightened. "Oh, wise and superwise Elfreda, in your words lurk the essence of truth. We four will have one of our own special brand of good times to-night. See, I throw all my cares to the winds." Grace waved her arms as though to cast Care from her. "I have tried to solve the mystery of the mysterious Kathleen and it is beyond me. I hoped after last night that she would be different from then on, but to-day she is more provoking than ever. I shall say nothing of her in my letter to Mabel, except that I delivered the invitation, but when we go to Mabel's for Thanksgiving if she asks for an explanation of certain things I shall not hesitate to give it."

"That is the way I like to hear you talk," approved Elfreda. "I don't mean the 'wise and

superwise Elfreda' part. I'm not so conceited, I hope. But it is high time you let that Kathleen West meander along to suit her own tricky little self. She hasn't an iota of Overton spirit nor a shred of conscience, and instead of appreciating your kind offices she is far more likely to repay you by dragging you into something unpleasant. I could see by Miriam's expression when you told us about the capture of that man that she thought you had trusted Kathleen too far, too."

"I confess I was thinking that very thing," laughed Miriam, "but how Elfreda guessed it is more than I can see."

"But the man has been captured, the story has appeared in the Overton paper and Kathleen has kept her word about not mentioning me in connection with the affair," protested Grace. "Nothing unpleasant can possibly happen now."

But Grace was destined to realize before many hours passed that she had been over-confident.

CHAPTER XII

TREACHERY

THE morning after the party in Miriam's room Grace lingered in the living room at Wayne Hall long enough to dash off her letter of acceptance of Mabel Ashe's invitation for Thanksgiving. She was on the point of slipping it into the envelope when the loud ringing of the door bell caused her to start. A moment later she heard the maid say: "Miss Harlowe? I'll see if she's in her room."

"Here I am," called Grace, stepping into the hall. "Oh, I see. A special delivery letter for me from Mabel." Grace signed the postman's book, then, closing the hall door, hurried into the living room to read her letter. Opening it, she drew out not only the letter but a folded newspaper clipping as well. The clipping fluttered to the floor. Grace stooped mechanically to pick it up, her eyes on the open letter. A mystified expression crept into her face as she read that gradually changed to one of consternation. With a sharp cry of dismay, she let the letter fall from her hands, while she fumbled with the clipping in a nervous effort to unfold it.

One glance at the headline that confronted her

and Grace's gray eyes grew black with anger. "How dared she do it! How could she be so contemptible!" Snatching the letter from the table Grace dashed up the stairs to her room. Tears of rage glistened in her eyes. She stood in the middle of the floor with set teeth, closing and unclosing her fingers in an effort to regain her self-control. "I won't cry over it. I won't. I won't," she kept repeating to herself. "She isn't worth my tears. But Father and Mother will be so hurt and displeased. I ought never to have tried to help her. I might have known she wouldn't play fairly."

Grace flung herself into a chair and again began a perusal of the disturbing clipping. "Pretty Senior Plays Sleuth," she read. "Larry, the Locksmith, Captured." A tide of crimson swept over her face as she read further. "Overton College Girl Tracks Dangerous Criminal to His Lair. If Miss Grace Harlowe, a senior at Overton College, had not been possessed of a remarkably good memory for faces, Lawrence Baines, known to the underworld as 'Larry, the Locksmith,' would undoubtedly be at large to-day. Miss Harlowe, whose home is in Oakdale——"

With a despairing groan, Grace dashed the clipping to the floor, and springing to her feet began walking nervously up and down the room.

She had not dreamed that Kathleen could find it in her heart to behave so despicably. She had shamefully abused the confidence that Grace had reposed in her for what seemed in Grace's eyes to be an infinitesimally small gain. Her cheeks burned as she thought of the thousands of people who had seen her name blazoned at the head of a column of police court news. Her father always bought the very paper in which it stood on his way to the office in the morning. He had, of course, seen it. He now knew that she had broken her word.

A sob rose to her lips, then she threw back her head with an air of resolution and, hastily drawing her chair in front of the table, seized her fountain pen, and opening it with an energy that left several ink spots on her white silk blouse, began a letter to her father. For an hour she continued to write steadily, covering sheet after sheet of paper. At last she signed her name, and with a mournful sigh folded her letter, slipping it into the envelope without reading it. Putting on her wraps, she left the house and hurried to the post office, where she sent her letter by special delivery.

But another task still lay before her. Grace's fine face hardened. It was not a pleasant task, but it would have to be done. She hoped the newspaper girl would be in her room, and she

hoped Patience had not yet returned from Westbrook. Grace rang the bell at Wayne Hall with more zeal than was strictly necessary, thereby exciting a scowl from the maid who answered the door. She peeped into the living room, but Kathleen was not among the girls there.

At the head of the stairs she halted. The door of Kathleen's room was closed. "Is she at home, or not?" Grace paused before the door and rapped sharply. There was a moment of silence, then a quick, light step sounded inside and the door was opened by Kathleen herself. Her usually pale face became flooded with color as she met the steady light of Grace's scornful eyes. Rallying all her forces, she returned the disconcerting gaze with one of defiant bravado. "Oh, good afternoon," she said, setting her lips in a straight line, a veritable danger signal.

Without stopping to choose her words, Grace cried out: "How could you do it? You knew I wished no mention to be made of my name. You promised not to use it."

Kathleen eyed her with a contemptuous smile. "My dear Miss Harlowe, you must be very obtuse to imagine even for an instant that I would spoil a good story by writing only what you gave me permission to write. What do you know of the requirements of my paper, or of the style in which a story should be written? The

story was too good to let pass. I knew, though, that you would never consent to allowing me to use your name. So I said 'Very well,' and used it. 'Very well' can hardly be construed as a promise."

The smiling insolence of the other girl's manner was almost too much for Grace's self-control. Twice she essayed to speak, but the words would not come. When she did find her voice she was dimly surprised at its tense evenness.

"Miss West, I made clear to you in the beginning my reason for not wishing you to use my name in connection with what occurred in Oakdale or in any other story you might write. I gave you the news I had stumbled upon willingly. Why could you not have written a clever, interesting story without betraying my confidence?"

"Don't attempt to take me to task for not living up to some ridiculous standard of yours," returned Kathleen savagely. "If you did not wish to see yourself in print, you were extremely silly to tell your tale to a representative of the press. To gather news for my paper is my business. Do you understand? I shall use whatever information comes my way, unless some good reason arises for not using it."

"As in the case of your Christmas story last year, which you decided at the last moment not

to send," supplemented Grace with quiet contempt.

Kathleen did not reply. Grace's remark had struck home. She had not forgotten her treacherous attempt to spoil Arline's and Grace's Christmas plans of the year before.

"Even in the face of last year I did not believe you capable of such treachery," continued Grace, her youthful voice very stern. "I am in a measure to blame for having trusted you. I should have known better."

The newspaper girl winced at this thrust, but said nothing.

"And to think," Grace went on bitterly, "that I broke my promise to my father for a girl so devoid of loyalty and honor that she could not understand the first principle of fair play!"

Grace's bitter denunciation aroused fully the other girl's deep-seated resentment against her. "Leave this room," she cried out, her voice rising, her eyes snapping with rage. "Don't ever come here again. This room belongs to me——"

"And also to me," said a quiet voice from the doorway. "What seems to be the trouble here?" Patience Eliot walked into the room, traveling bag in hand. She surveyed the two girls with considerable curiosity.

Without answering, Kathleen turned abruptly and walked to the window, her favorite method of showing her utter contempt of a situation. Patience bent an inquiring gaze on Grace, whose eyes met hers unflinchingly.

"Pardon me, Patience, if I don't answer your question," returned Grace. "Perhaps Miss West will answer you after I am gone. This much I may say. She has ordered me not to come again to this room. Therefore, although I am very fond of you, I feel that it won't be right for me to come here to see you. Will you come into our room as often as you can and forgive me for staying away from yours?"

Without waiting for an answer, Grace slipped from the room, leaving Patience to stare speculatively after her, then at the tense little figure in the window.

Before she had time to address Kathleen, the latter wheeled about, sneering and defiant. "If you are so anxious to know what the trouble is go and ask your dear friend, Miss Harlowe. She will tell you quickly enough behind my back. Oh, I despise a hypocrite!"

"I cannot allow you to call Grace Harlowe a hypocrite," said Patience evenly, though her blue eyes flashed. "Whatever has happened I am quite sure is not Grace's fault."

"Then it must be mine," was Kathleen's con-

temptuous retort. "Why don't you speak plainly and say what you mean?"

"Very well, I will speak plainly," declared Patience. "I am sure you must have insulted Grace deeply or she would not refuse to come to my room again. I am not going to ask you to tell me what has happened, and I know that I shall not hear it from Grace unless I insist on knowing the truth. The very fact that you are at fault will be sufficient to tie Grace's tongue. However, I shall ask Grace to tell me, as her refusal to come to this room again, is my affair, too."

"Your faith in Miss Harlowe is touching," sneered the newspaper girl.

"I only wish I had the same faith in you," returned Patience gravely. And Kathleen could think of no answer to Patience's significant words.

CHAPTER XIII

THE INVITATION

NEITHER Grace nor Kathleen went to their classes that morning. Feeling reasonably certain that the newspaper girl was in the wrong, Patience made no further effort toward discovering the nature of the quarrel. She unpacked her bag, putting away its contents in her usual methodical manner without so much as a glance in Kathleen's direction. Then, taking her note book, she went quietly out to her class in English, leaving her roommate still standing at the window, her very back expressing defiant animosity.

Once in her room, Grace reread Mabel Ashe's note. She now understood its import.

"My Dear Grace:—

"Words cannot tell you how sorry I am for what has occurred. I did not know until it was too late. The edition had gone to press. I am afraid I couldn't have helped much, for the powers that be were delighted with the story, and that little traitor, Kathleen West, scored a triumph. Knowing you as I do, I am sure you never gave her permission to publish that story.

"Of course, you were simply a great heroine in it, but having heard the Oakdale part of the tale from you, and knowing of your promise to your father, it is plain to be seen that she took advantage of you in some way. If you haven't already delivered my invitation to her, then don't do so. I feel deeply resentful toward her. You can tell me the whole thing when you are with me. I shall expect you and the girls on Wednesday evening on the train that leaves Overton between two and three o'clock in the afternoon. You know the one I mean. I'll look it up in the time table before Wednesday.

"If you happen to know one extra-delightful girl who has no Thanksgiving plans ask her to come, too. Frances can't arrange to be with us, so we need one more girl to do away with the problem of the 'lonely fifth.' Three pairs are much nicer than two and a half. The half always seems out of things. Of course, I am proceeding in the belief that K. W. won't come now, even if you have invited her. If she has a shred of delicacy in her cheeky little composition, she will stay away.

"I must stop now and rush off on the trail of a much-feted debutante of whose engagement I have heard canny rumors. Until Wednesday.

"MABEL."

"What a darling Mabel is," said Grace half aloud. "I wonder who I had better invite." Arline's pretty, wilful face rose before her. She would have liked to ask Arline, but that was out of the question. There was Ruth, but Ruth and Arline were too closely associated to be separated. Suddenly she remembered Patience. "The very girl!" she exclaimed. "I'll go and ask her now. Oh, no, I can't. I said I wouldn't go into her room again. Never mind, I will see her at luncheon."

Grace made it a point to be the first girl in the dining room at luncheon, and when Patience appeared beckoned her to the seat beside her. "Sit here," she invited. Emma won't be in. She is going to Morton House for luncheon; she told me so."

Patience slipped into the vacant seat. "I would like to have a talk with you after luncheon," she said in a guarded voice.

"Then come into my room," returned Grace softly.

During the progress of the meal Kathleen West appeared, silent and morose. She nodded slightly to several girls, favored Grace and Patience with an unspeakably insolent glance, then turned her undivided attention to her luncheon.

"Why won't you tell me what happened?" was Patience's abrupt question when Grace had

beckoned her into her room and closed the door. "She is my roommate, you see, and unless you enlighten me as to the nature of her crime I shall not know just how to proceed with her."

"I don't like to tell tales," demurred Grace. "Still, I believe I am justified in repeating the story to you, Patience. You have no illusions regarding Kathleen."

"None whatever," smiled Patience, but a disapproving frown wrinkled her forehead at the recital of Kathleen's treachery. "It was abominable in her," she said when Grace had finished. "And I had begun to assure myself that she was improving daily, too."

"She came out of her shell so beautifully the night we went to the station house," sighed Grace. "I never dreamed she was planning mischief. However, I have something to ask you. Here, read this letter; then I'll talk." She tendered Mabel's letter to her friend.

Patience held out her hand for it, then glanced rapidly through it. "This is from the much-worshipped Miss Ashe, isn't it?"

"Yes. We four are going to spend Thanksgiving with her, and, Patience, I should like to have you go with us. Won't you please be the 'extra-delightful girl' and say you'll go?"

"Why—why!" Patience, usually cool and unemotional, colored with pleasure. "Are you

sure you really want me? I should be delighted to go. It is very sweet in you to ask me, Grace."

"Not in the least. It's very jolly in you to accept so promptly. There is now only one hitch in the programme. I have already delivered Mabel's invitation to Kathleen."

"She won't go," predicted Patience. "She may be lawless, but she is too wise to make any such mistake."

Patience's prediction, however, seemed destined not to carry far. To the amazement of the five young women who waited on the station platform for the coming of the New York train on Wednesday afternoon, the newspaper girl, suit case in hand, walked serenely into view just as the train was heard whistling around a bend half a mile below the station.

"She is actually going to inflict herself upon us," muttered Elfreda in disgust. Grace had briefly explained the situation to her three friends.

Just then Kathleen's eyes came to rest on the little group. A flash of surprised anger flitted across her moody face as she espied Patience, then, with an eloquent shrug of her shoulders, she marched off toward the other end of the train.

"My doom is sealed," remarked Patience

dryly. "Nothing can put our shattered acquaintance together again."

"I knew she wouldn't go with us even for spite," declared Grace wearily. "Now, suppose we dismiss her from our minds. I, for one, wish to enjoy our Thanksgiving vacation with Mabel. I may as well tell you that I am still very angry with Miss West, and for the first time in my life I know what it means to be unforgiving."

Grace spoke with bitterness. In her letter to her father she had asked him to telegraph her that he forgave her. She had lingered at Wayne Hall until the last moment, but had received no word from him. Now she would not know until she returned from New York. To be sure, she would try to dismiss the whole thing from her mind, but at times it rose before her like a dark shadow, shutting out for the moment the pleasure of her holiday, and causing her to feel gloomy and depressed.

During the journey to New York nothing was seen of Kathleen, who had taken good care not to enter the same car in which the five girls had secured seats. Grace saw her again for an instant when, at the end of the journey, the throng of passengers surged toward the iron gates that separated them from the friends who stood anxiously awaiting their arrival.

Elfreda's keen eyes were the first to catch

sight of Mabel. "There she is, girls! Doesn't she look beautiful?"

Mabel Ashe's charming face smiled an eager welcome as she hurried forward with both hands outstretched to greet the travelers.

"You dear things!" she cried; "I began to believe I should never see any of you again. Hurry right along. Our car is waiting and we are going to break all the speed laws and be home in time for dinner."

"Wait a moment," laughed Grace. "This is the 'extra-delightful girl.'" Grace introduced Patience to Mabel. A long, searching glance passed between the two young women, then their hands met in a strong clasp that betokened mutual liking.

"I am sure we shall be friends," declared Mabel.

"No surer than I am," smiled Patience. "I have heard so much about you."

"Grace wrote me about you, too," returned Mabel warmly. "I am so pleased that you could come. This way to the car, everyone." She led them through the station to where numerous automobiles were drawn up to the sidewalk. "There is our car." She pointed to a roomy dark blue car. "Hop in," she directed. "The sooner we reach home the longer we'll have to talk. I am not going to the office again until the

afternoon following Thanksgiving. I begged so hard I was allowed a vacation for once."

In what seemed to Grace an incredibly brief space of time, the distance between the station and the Ashes' winter home far out on Riverside Drive was covered. The five guests could not help feeling a trifle impressed at sight of the great stone house which Mabel called home. During her college days it was Mabel's lovable personality that had enshrined her so deeply in the hearts of the students at Overton. The knowledge that her father was a millionaire carried little weight. This thought occurred to Grace as they filed through the massive door of the vestibule and into the beautiful hall furnished in English fashion. A back log glowed ruddily in the big open fireplace, and the flickering flames crackled a welcome.

"I wouldn't allow James to turn on the lights. I wished you to see the hall just as it is. I love it when the shadows begin to gather, and only the firelight glows and gleams! Those andirons are very old. They belonged to one of my ancestors. There are a lot of old things in the garret. What garret is not full of antiques?"

"Ours," returned Elfreda promptly. "We belong to that despised class, 'nouveau riche,' therefore we are extremely short on noted ancestors and relics and things."

"There is nothing like perfect frankness, is there?" laughed Patience. "Never mind, Elfreda, it isn't ancestors that count."

"It is dinner that counts, or ought to count, just now. I am going to whisk you upstairs to your rooms, and give you ten minutes for repairs, then, 'down to dinner you must go, you must go,'" chanted Mabel, winding her arm about Grace's waist and drawing her toward the stairway. "Follow us and you won't be sorry. We have a lift if two flights of stairs dismay you."

"Lead on," commanded Miriam.

"Which will you choose, to room together or alone?"

"Together!" was the united response.

"Wait a moment," said Anne. "I wish to ask you, Mabel, if you would object to rooming with Grace. I have roomed with her so long that I feel as though I"—with a mischievous glance at Grace's amazed face, Anne finished in a deliberate tone—"were very selfish. So I thought perhaps you would appreciate an opportunity to have her to yourself, too."

"Oh!" ejaculated Elfreda. "I thought you were going to say you were tired of Grace."

"So did I." A smile gave place to the peculiar expression on Grace's face. "I might have known better, though."

"That is generous in you, Anne," declared Mabel. "As hostess I wouldn't have been so selfish as to propose it, but——"

"Anne, if you really don't care, I would like to room with Mabel," interposed Grace. "I have so much to tell her that the rest of you have already heard. We can have lengthy midnight confabs without disturbing any one but ourselves."

"Then, that settles it. Room together you shall," averred Anne. "There is no use in breaking up the Nesbit-Briggs Association. Patience, will you accept me for a roommate?"

Patience bowed exaggeratedly and offered her arm to Anne.

"Come on, Grace, we'll lead the way," proposed Mabel. "I am so anxious for you to meet Father. I expect him home at any moment." Tucking her arm in Grace's, she led the party up the stairs and, pausing before a half-open door, said hospitably: "Welcome all over again, children. This room is for Elfreda and Miriam. Enter and make yourselves comfy. You and Anne are to have the next one, Patience. My quarters are at the end of the hall. I am going to see Grace safely there, then I'll send my maid to you. She will be delighted to be of service to some one. I have needed her very little since I turned newspaper woman, and she spends the

greater part of her time lamenting over the fact. Oh, I forgot to tell you, don't trouble to dress for dinner to-night. We shall be strictly informal. I have ordered an early dinner. We will dress afterward. Father is going to take us to the theatre."

The mere mention of Mabel's father brought to Grace's mind that which she had been making a determined effort to forget, her father's displeasure. Her face clouded with pain and resentment as she thought of the girl whose treachery had brought about the first misunderstanding of her life between her and her father.

"If Father had only written me a line or sent me a telegram," she thought sadly, winking back the tears that threatened to fall. "I must not let Mabel imagine for a minute that I am anything but happy for to-night, at least. If she knew how dreadfully I felt about Father it would partly spoil her pleasure this evening. I'll try to act as though nothing unpleasant had happened," decided Grace as she followed Mabel into what she had termed her "quarters."

Grace could not refrain from giving a soft exclamation of delight as she gazed admiringly about the beautiful room into which she was ushered.

"This is my own particular hanging-out

place," laughed Mabel. "When I am at home, which is seldom, I spend most of my time in here. See my desk! I'll tell you a secret, Grace. I am writing a novel. It's more than half done, too. I haven't told any one else, not even Father. My greatest trouble is not having the time to work on it. My newspaper work keeps me busy, early and late, but I can't complain, because I am gaining all sorts of valuable experience." Mabel talked on about her work, and as Grace watched the sparkling, animated face of her lovely friend she felt very sure that Mabel Ashe, at least, would never sacrifice a friend in the interest of her paper.

CHAPTER XIV

A CONGENIAL SEXTETTE

AS the five girls, escorted by Mabel, descended the broad stairs to the hall, a tall, rather stern-faced man, whose dark hair had just a sprinkling of gray at the temples, came forward from one end of the room to meet them. Mabel made a joyful little rush toward him, holding his hand in both her own. "I knew you wouldn't disappoint me. Girls, this is my father. Father, let me introduce you to the nicest girls in Overton."

Robert Ashe's sombre eyes smiled a kindly welcome as he looked into the radiant young faces of his daughter's guests. As each girl was presented to him he shook hands with her in a hearty, whole-souled way that completely dispelled any feeling of constraint on her part.

"Father, you may take Elfreda in to dinner to-night. To-morrow it will be some one else's turn. I hope you will be here to enough meals to go the round."

"So do I," laughed Mr. Ashe, the stern look on his face disappearing, his brown eyes looking almost boyish.

Dinner proved a merry meal. The usually

quiet room rang with the gay laughter of the happy girls, who had planned to enjoy every hour of their holiday. When dinner was over, Mr. Ashe ceremoniously invited them to be his guests at a theatre party that night.

"We'll have to make one evening dress do duty while we are here, Mabel. We had room in our suit cases for only one, and didn't want to bring trunks," explained Grace, as they lingered in the hall to talk for a moment before going to their rooms to dress.

"Never mind, if you run out of gowns you can wear mine," offered Mabel. "That is, you and Miriam can. I'm not so sure of Anne and Elfreda and Patience."

The play Mr. Ashe had selected for his guests' entertainment was one whose strong element of human interest had early carried it into favor with the New York audience that nightly crowded the theatre in which it was being presented. The star, a young woman of exceptional talent, almost a great artist, had by her remarkable portrayal of the leading role sprung from obscurity to fame in a single night.

"I am so glad we are going to see her!" exclaimed Anne, when Mabel had announced her father's choice of play for them. "Miss South-

ard wrote me about her. She played small parts in Mr. Southard's company two years ago. He prophesied that she would some day be heard from."

"Isn't it a pity the Southards aren't here this winter?" sighed Grace. "Mr. Southard was not anxious to go to England, but he could not help himself. It's one of the vicissitudes of an actor's life, isn't it, Anne?"

Anne nodded gravely. "It is pleasant to travel about and see what the rest of the world is doing, but it is hard to leave home, too."

"Still, you are thinking of doing it when your senior days are over, you bad child," interposed Grace slyly. "I warn you, you will meet with strenuous opposition."

"From you?" asked Anne, a little flush creeping into her pale face.

"No, not from me," retorted Grace with significant emphasis.

"Don't tease Anne," laughed Mabel. "Let Genius do as it chooses."

"If you mean me, I choose to go and dress this instant. Come on, Patience. We will hurry our dressing and be downstairs first. Then we can monopolize Mr. Ashe."

"Oh, no, you won't," contradicted Elfreda. "I have reserved that privilege for myself."

"We are ready," exulted Anne outside El-

freda's door half an hour later. "What did I tell you?"

"So am I," replied Elfreda, opening the door. "And so is Miriam."

Elfreda was looking particularly handsome in her evening gown of golden brown messaline, trimmed with dull gold embroidery. By constant training and self-denial she had reduced her weight to one hundred and thirty-five pounds and could not be truthfully called stout. Her fair hair was piled high upon her head, and one dull gold butterfly gleamed in its wavy meshes. Miriam's gown was in her favorite apricot shade of crepe de chine and brought out fully the beauty of her black hair and eyes and her exquisite coloring. Mabel had chosen black silk net over delft blue, while Patience wore a gray chiffon frock over gray silk with touches of old rose, a frock exactly suited to her calm, high-bred type of face. Anne's dainty white crepe de chine frock made her look anything but a theatrical star. Grace, however, had for once departed from her favorite blue and wore a white chiffon gown whose exquisitely simple lines made the most of her slender, supple figure. The charm of early sixteen radiated from her youthful person, and she looked no older than when she had led the freshman basketball team on to victory in Oakdale High School.

"Grace can't grow up in spite of her long skirts and done-up hair," smiled Miriam.

"That is precisely what I was thinking," agreed Anne. "Is she sixteen or twenty-three?"

"Aren't you pleased with us, Father, and won't you feel inordinately proud of your theatre party?" called Mabel from the stairway as they descended to the hall, where Mr. Ashe stood looking reflectively into the fire as he waited for his charges.

"Mere words fail to express my admiration," he laughed, bowing to the sextette of pretty girls, who smilingly nodded their appreciation of his speech.

"Isn't he a perfect angel?" asked Mabel, sidling up to him and slipping within the circle of his arm. "I don't see how I ever had the heart to go to college and leave him."

"She has no compunction about rushing off to work on a newspaper, day after day, and leaving me daughterless," complained Mr. Ashe lightly. Yet a shadow so slight as to be hardly noticeable crossed his face, which no one save the lynx-eyed Elfreda saw, who made mental note of it. "He doesn't want her to work," was her shrewd conclusion.

"But I am here to-night," protested Mabel, catching his hand in hers almost appealingly,

"and I'm going to be at home for a whole day and evening. Will you forswear business and help me entertain the girls to-morrow?"

"I promise to devote myself heart and soul to their cause," said Mr. Ashe solemnly, raising his hand. "Only you must allow me to go down to the office for a little while in the morning."

"Very well. Remember, all telegrams and telephone messages are to be tabooed after you leave there."

"Granted. What about all newspaper assignments?"

"Turn about is fair play," returned Mabel, flushing. "They can keep the telephone messages and telegrams company."

CHAPTER XV

A FIRELIGHT COUNCIL

IT was well after midnight when the theatre party returned to Mabel's home, rather sleepy, but delighted with their glimpse of pleasure-loving New York by night. After the theatre they were invited to be Mr. Ashe's guests at supper, and were promptly whisked away in their motor car to one of New York's particularly exclusive hotels, where a delicious little supper was served to them in one of the hotel's private dining rooms.

Half-past eight o'clock Thanksgiving morning found the six girls downstairs and seated at the breakfast table. Mr. Ashe, who made it an ironclad rule always to be in his office at half-past eight o'clock, even on holidays, had time for only a hasty good morning all around before his man announced that his car was at the door.

"Remember, Mab, you are to bring the girls down to my office after Thanksgiving services this morning," he called back as he paused on the threshold of the dining room.

"I'll remember, General," called Mabel, with a military salute.

"Oh, are we going to church this morning?" asked Elfreda quickly.

"Yes. There is to be a short but beautiful service in the church Father and I attend. You will hear some wonderful music, too."

"We went to church here in New York City on Thanksgiving Day, three years ago," said Grace. "Anne, Miriam and I were visiting the Southards. We went to a church whose minister had at one time been an actor."

"Oh, yes, I know that church, and I have met the minister. I interviewed him last fall and then wrote a story about him for the paper. He is a fine man. I wish I knew Everett Southard and his sister."

"You shall know them as soon as they return from England," promised Anne. "I am sure they will be pleased to know you."

"I hope so," returned Mabel. "It was a great honor for Mr. Southard to have such a flattering offer from that great English manager, wasn't it?"

"Did you know that Anne could have gone with them if she had been willing to put off her graduation for another year?" asked Miriam.

"I didn't know it, but I'm not surprised," responded Mabel. "Neither fame nor honor would tempt you to allow your chums to finish the race without you. Isn't that true, Anne?"

"True as can be," affirmed Anne. "I owe my greatest happiness to them. I couldn't desert them if I were asked to star in the whole Shakesperian repertoire." Her brown eyes looked tender loyalty at her three friends as she made this assertion.

"We couldn't get along without Anne," declared Miriam. "She is our balance wheel. She doesn't say much, but whatever she says counts."

"How ridiculous!" scoffed Anne. "These self-reliant persons don't need a balance wheel, Mabel."

"Some of us do," observed Grace, an expression of pain in her fine eyes.

"You don't," contradicted Elfreda pointedly.

Mabel eyed the two girls reflectively. "I'm a mind reader," she announced. "I understand both of you. After church this morning I am going to call a general welfare meeting in the library. Our universe needs regulating." She smiled gayly upon her guests, yet there was a hint of purpose in her tone as she added: "At least we can exchange valuable information and get down to cause and effect."

After breakfast, a great scurrying to get ready for church ensued, and an hour later their big, faithful motor carried them off to the Thanksgiving service.

"It doesn't seem a bit like Thanksgiving," commented Miriam, as they sped down Riverside Drive.

"More like Indian summer," observed Patience.

The day was glorious with sunshine. There was hardly a suspicion of frost in the air and the snowy setting considered so essential to a successful Thanksgiving Day was entirely absent.

"We never have this kind of Thanksgiving weather in Oakdale, do we, Grace?" asked Miriam.

"Neither do we in Fairview," put in Elfreda. "I can recall only one Thanksgiving that wasn't snowy, and I can remember that because I behaved so outrageously. I was a young barbarian of eight, who screamed and kicked my way to whatever I wanted. Two days before Thanksgiving Pa brought me home a sled. It was red with a white deer painted on it and underneath the deer was the word 'Fleet,' printed in big white letters. I knew that with such a name it could hardly help being the best sled in Fairview. The night before Thanksgiving the rain came down in torrents and the next morning there wasn't a square inch of snow for miles around on which to try out my beloved sled.

"It was a bitter morning for me, and I pro-

ceeded to wreak my displeasure upon my family. I behaved like a savage all day and ended by being locked in Ma's room with my Thanksgiving dinner on a tray, minus dessert. I got even that night, though, for Ma had invited our minister and his wife to dinner. I waited until I had had my dinner and they had finished, too, and were sitting in the parlor. Then I began screaming down a register, which was right over them, my very candid opinion of them and of Thanksgiving Day in general.

"It was funny, wasn't it?" she chuckled in answer to the burst of laughter that greeted her recital. "But it was dreadful for poor Ma. The minister's wife never forgave me for it. She always referred to me behind my back as that 'terrible Briggs child.' "

"Another reminiscence for 'The Adventures of Elfreda,' " said Miriam.

"Elfreda is going to write a book of her early adventures and misadventures," explained Grace to Patience. "Did we ever tell you about it?"

"No; but in the event of its publication I speak now for an autographed copy," returned Patience, with twinkling eyes.

"I'll have one done up for you in crushed Levant," was Elfreda's prompt offer.

"This is our church," proclaimed Mabel. The

car found a place for itself in the long line of automobiles drawn up at the curb, and, alighting from it, the party made their way sedately up the broad stone walk to the main entrance of the stately, gray stone edifice.

During the beautiful Thanksgiving service Grace's thoughts would drift into the same painful channel that she had inwardly vowed to avoid. The sweetness of the music made her think of home, and the earnest words of the minister sank deep into her heart. She, who had so much to thank her father and mother for, had carelessly allowed the name of Harlowe to be dragged into the limelight of police court news. She was unworthy of her parents' confidence. That she was unjustly severe in her self-arraignment did not occur to Grace. It was her first experience with real remorse and, as is usually the case, she did not allow herself the luxury of extenuating circumstances.

When she bowed her head during the concluding prayer her eyes were full of tears and it was only by desperate effort that she managed to wink them back.

"Father wants to see us now, you know," Mabel reminded her guests, as they took their places once more in the automobile. "To Father's office," she directed the chauffeur, and the car with its freight of happy girls glided down

the avenue toward the section of the city in which Mr. Ashe's office was situated.

"Of course, Father's employees don't work to-day," explained Mabel as they rolled along. "His private secretary is with him, but his offices are closed. He wishes us to take luncheon with him, then we are to go for a drive through Central Park. You've taken that drive before, I suppose, but it is such a beautiful day and all New York will be in evidence. I thought you would enjoy seeing the world and his wife out for a holiday."

"We have hardly seen enough of Central Park to grow tired of it," smiled Grace. "Anne is a seasoned New Yorker and so is Elfreda, but Miriam and I never stayed here for any length of time. Patience will have to answer for herself."

"My knowledge of the metropolis is vague, and my experience here has consisted largely in being rushed from the depot to the hotel, and from the hotel to the depot. So you can readily see that Central Park is in the nature of an innovation, to me," responded Patience.

Luncheon was eaten in a restaurant whose extreme exclusiveness made it an especially desirable place for Mr. Ashe to entertain his daughter and her guests. The drive through Central Park came next, and it was after four

o'clock before they turned into Riverside Drive for home.

"Please come down to the library as soon as you take off your wraps," directed Mabel. "The time for the council has arrived."

"Only Campfire girls have councils," retorted Miriam.

"What do you know about Campfire girls?" demanded Mabel.

"A whole lot," put in Grace. "We met five girls last summer who had just been on a trip through the White Mountains. They called themselves the 'Meadow-Brook Girls,' but they were real Campfire girls. They had spent a summer in camp and had won whole strings of beads for their achievements."

"They spent a day or two in Oakdale," explained Miriam. "One of them, a funny little girl who lisped, was a cousin of Hippy Wingate. Her name was Grace Thompson, but her three chums called her Tommy. They had a guardian with them, too, a Miss Elting."

"I liked the tall one, Miss Burrell, best," continued Grace, "but they were all interesting. The girl who owned the car was a Miss McCarthy, a true Irish colleen and awfully witty. She and Nora O'Malley swore friendship on sight. Then there was a stout girl whose nickname was 'Buster,' and a quiet, brown-eyed

girl named Hazel Holland. They write to me occasionally and they are all going to Overton when they have finished high school."

"Why did they call themselves the 'Meadow-Brook Girls'?"

"Oh, that was the name of their home town."

"What good times they must have had," commented Mabel.

"They did, and all sorts of hairbreadth escapes as well. They won ever so many honor beads for bravery and prompt action in time of danger. But to return to the subject of our council. Don't you think we had better put our wraps away and convene? That's what councils do, isn't it?"

"Convene is correct," Elfreda assured her gravely. "Allow me to head the procession upstairs. The sooner we go up the sooner we shall come down."

A little later they clustered about the cheerful open fireplace in the library. Mabel, who was seated on a stool at one side of the fire, reached forward for the poker and prodded the half-burnt log energetically. The others watched her in silence until she laid down the poker with a suddenness that caused them all to start, and turning about said almost brusquely: "I wish you girls to tell me frankly everything about Kathleen West. Until that 'Larry,

They Clustered About the Fireplace.

the Locksmith' story came out I hadn't the slightest idea that there was anything save the pleasantest relations between her and Grace. That story set me to thinking. I knew something was wrong, for Grace had told me the Oakdale part of it in strict confidence. When I received a cold little note from Miss West declining my invitation, I was sure of it. Whatever it is, I feel responsible, for I asked you to look out for Miss West in the first place. Won't you please tell me all about it?"

Mabel's frank appeal was irresistible.

"I am sure it would be better to tell Mabel everything from the beginning," said Anne in a decided tone.

"I agree with Anne," came from Miriam.

"Of course she ought to know it," declared Elfreda. "Didn't I say so last year?"

"Last year!" exclaimed Mabel. "How long has this unpleasant state of affairs been going on?"

"Ever since the early part of our junior year," admitted Grace. "I disliked to write you of it. We thought she would change. We did everything we could to please her, but she is not in the least like any other girl I have ever known. Ask Patience about her. She rooms with Miss West."

"Do you?" Mabel turned her amazed glance

upon Patience. "And not one of you said a word to me of it."

"We thought it better not to mention Miss West," said Grace slowly. "You can readily understand our attitude, Mabel. I feel as though I ought to tell you that she came to New York on the same train with us. She was in the car ahead of ours."

"Then I shall surely see her before she goes back to Overton. I suppose she came down purposely to be patted on the back for her big story. Now begin the terrible tale of how it all happened."

Grace began with their meeting of Kathleen West at the Overton station and of their ready acceptance of the newspaper girl for Mabel's sake. When she told of Kathleen's sudden avoidance of her and the other members of the Semper Fidelis Club, and of her subsequent intimacy with Alberta Wicks and Mary Hampton, Mabel exclaimed impatiently: "Those girls again! They were born trouble-makers, weren't they?"

"But they turned out beautifully," defended Grace, "only I haven't reached that part of my story yet. It is really a very nice part, only so many disagreeable things happened before it."

"I shall never notice Kathleen West again!" was Mabel's indignant cry when Grace had fin-

ished the account of Kathleen's attempt to spoil Arline's unselfish Christmas plan.

"You mustn't say that." Grace grew very earnest. "That was just the reason I didn't wish you to know. I can't bear to be a tale-bearer, but still I believe it is your right to know the facts. You are one of us, and we have no secrets from one another, yet I don't like to say any thing that will lower her in your estimation. She may have been a true friend to you."

"Don't worry about that part of it, Grace. You aren't a tale-bearer." Mabel reached forward to pat Grace's hand. "If only you had told me long ago."

Grace continued her narrative, ending with Kathleen's final attempt to be revenged on the Semper Fidelis Club, and the clever way in which she had been brought to book by none other than Alberta Wicks and Mary Hampton.

"What a little villain she is, and how splendidly Alberta and Mary turned out," interposed Mabel. "She was far too clever to give me the faintest inkling of the truth. I used to wonder why she was always so noncommittal about things at Overton. I laid it to her peculiar temperament, never suspecting that she had good reason for refusing to discuss her college life. I had an idea her cleverness would pave the way

to great things for her at Overton. I supposed her to be very popular."

"Wait until I finish my discourse," smiled Grace, "then you shall hear what Patience, the All Wise, thinks of her." She went over rather hurriedly her recognition of "Larry, the Locksmith" in the streets of Overton, of how she had trailed him within sight of his hiding place, and of her tardy remembrance of her promise to her father. "I was uncertain what to do, when I happened to catch sight of Miss West," continued Grace. "An evil genius must have prompted me to take her into my confidence. But it was a good story, and Patience had told me only a day or two before that Miss West had been mourning over her lack of news for her paper. She made what I believed to be a promise to leave out the Oakdale part of the story and not to use my name within it. Not a line of the Oakdale part of the story appeared in the Overton papers. The chief of police kept his word, at any rate.

"I never dreamed of her treachery until I received your letter and the clipping. I know Father and Mother have read it. Father always buys that paper. I haven't heard a word from home since then." Grace's voice faltered.

"You poor, dear child!" cried Mabel, springing from her stool and going over to Grace.

"Don't sympathize with me, Mabel, or I shall cry." Grace raised her head smilingly, but her gray eyes were full of tears.

"I've vowed eternal vengeance," proclaimed Elfreda savagely. She could not endure the thought that Grace should be made so unhappy.

"It is my own fault." Grace had regained her composure. "Perhaps some day I'll learn not to dive into things head first. I am sure I have displeased and hurt Father, or he would have written me before this."

"I think Miss West has behaved abominably, and I hope you will forgive me for having asked you to help her. If she is still in the office on Saturday I shall not hesitate to take her to task for her double-dealing."

"I am quite frank in saying that you may tell her whatever you choose." Grace's voice sounded very hard.

"Grace Harlowe, what has come over you?" exclaimed Elfreda. "You usually preach moderation, but now you are as vindictive and resentful as an Indian."

"Not quite," retorted Grace, half smiling. "I am merely what one might term 'deeply incensed.' It isn't a dangerous state, but it usually lasts a long time. Now, I've said the very last word of my say. It is your time to talk, Patience."

"I haven't much to say," began Patience, "except that Miss West is naturally rather hard and self-centered and her work as a reporter has accentuated it. Her ambition blinds her sense of honor. I suppose she has one, although I have occasionally doubted it."

"Don't you approve of newspaper work for women?" asked Mabel quickly.

"I ought to." The words slipped out unawares. "That is—I——"

"I know why!" cried Elfreda, wagging her head in triumph. "Because she is an editor's daughter and knows that a newspaper could not run successfully without women. James Merton Eliot, the well-known newspaper editor, is her father."

Exclamations of surprise greeted this announcement. To Miriam, Anne and Mabel this was news indeed, but the astonishment of Patience arose from a far different cause.

"How did you know it?" Patience asked Elfreda in open amazement.

"Oh, I heard you explaining to Grace at luncheon one day just how the Sunday section of a newspaper was put together. I could see you knew what you were talking about, and made up my mind then that you didn't get your information from Miss West. Then you dropped a letter one day when we were crossing the campus

addressed to James Merton Eliot, The Elms, South Framingham, Massachusetts. I picked it up and handed it to you, but I couldn't help seeing the address. I didn't think anything of it until I happened to read an article in a magazine on noted men of affairs, and found the same name staring me in the face. For a long time I couldn't think of why that particular name seemed familiar. Then I remembered. Still, I had never heard you say a word about your father's business. One night I asked you about him and you didn't give me any satisfaction. I could see that you didn't want to answer, so I didn't say another word, but I kept on wondering. What are you all laughing at?" she demanded, darting a suspicious glance about the circle of smiling faces.

"Elfreda, you are a wonder! I make my bow to you." Patience rose and, walking over to where Elfreda sat, bowed low before her.

Elfreda's plump hand was raised in protest, but there was curiosity written on every feature. "What made you keep it a secret?"

"I have designs on an editorial position on the 'College Herald' next year. But I want to win my literary spurs through my own efforts. I don't believe in reflected glory." Patience's earnestness was convincing.

"Neither do I," agreed Mabel heartily. "You

won't object if the editor of our paper knows, though, will you? He is an old friend of Father's. I am sure he will never forgive me if I don't introduce you to him. I am going to take you girls to the office with me on Saturday. But to go back to the object of our council, what are we to do in the case of Miss West?"

"Nothing." Grace spoke decisively.

"Oh, yes, we must do something, Grace dear." admonished Patience. "We mustn't give her up in this fashion."

"Then, suggest something," retorted Grace with an impatient frown.

"I will before long," promised Patience. "I can't think of a single thing now, but the inspiration will come. Will you all agree to help if I think of something startlingly worth while?"

"I'll consider the matter," was Mabel's dry comment.

The other girls answered in the affirmative, but without enthusiasm. Grace's almost hostile attitude toward Kathleen had had a potent effect upon them. Patience, feeling their acquiescence to be perfunctory, said no more on the subject. There was a perceptible lull in the conversation, then Mabel proposed that Miriam play for them, and the council broke up with alacrity and strolled off to the music room.

"It's time to dress for dinner. Father will be

here soon," announced Mabel. "To-night we are to have a little dance. I have been keeping it as a surprise for you. We have a perfectly darling ballroom in the house and I have invited a number of my friends to meet you."

Mabel's announcement was received with exclamations of delight. What girl does not welcome the very idea of a real dance to the notes of a real orchestra? The Overton girls went upstairs to dress for the coming dance, and for the time being their self-imposed problem of the newspaper girl was forgotten.

CHAPTER XVI

ELFREDA SHOWS GRACE THE WAY

MABEL'S dance was an occasion long to be discussed and remembered, and the remaining two days of the girls' Thanksgiving vacation were so crowded with the amusements she had planned for them that the moments flitted by on wings. Their visit to the offices of the great newspaper on whose staff both Mabel Ashe and Kathleen West were enrolled was a red-letter event. They had penetrated even to the fastnesses of the local room and art department, and were duly impressed with all they saw.

In the local room they had caught a brief glimpse of Kathleen West. She was seated at a desk at the lower end of the long room, writing industriously. So intent was she upon her work, that, either by accident or design, she failed to see the little group of sight-seers, who stood watching the rows of clicking typewriters, operated by the reporters of the various departments who were preparing copy for the composing room.

At the moment Grace had spied the newspaper girl hard at work a wave of admiration had

swept over her for this strange young woman who had treated her so badly. In spite of Kathleen's lack of principle, she had the will to work, and she had already achieved much in her chosen field. If only she had been like Ruth. Then the memory of Grace's own grievance drove away the kinder thought. As they were on the point of leaving the local room their eyes had chanced to meet, and Grace's flashed with an unmistakable contempt that caused Kathleen to color and turn her head.

On Sunday morning the dreaded good-byes were said and Mr. Ashe and Mabel saw their guests safely aboard the train for Overton. It was late Sunday afternoon when, tired and luggage laden, the five girls climbed into the automobile bus at the Overton station, and were straightway conveyed to Wayne Hall. Kathleen West had not returned on the same train with them, nor did she appear until late the following afternoon. That she might be reprimanded for overstaying her vacation either did not occur to her, or else the possibility held no terror for her.

The instant the door of Wayne Hall closed behind her Grace darted to the house bulletin board. In it was a letter for Anne, one for Elfreda and two for herself. She choked back a sob as she saw that one of the envelopes bore

her father's handwriting, the other that of Arline Thayer.

"Don't wait for me, Grace. Go on upstairs and read your letters. I must see Mrs. Elwood about that package I expected by express." Setting down her suit case, Anne hurried down the hall. Always thoughtful for others, she now determined that Grace should be alone when she opened her father's letter.

With a grateful glance after Anne's retreating figure and a "see you later" to Miriam, Elfreda and Patience, who had stopped at the living room door to talk with Laura Atkins and Mildred Taylor, Grace went to her room. With trembling fingers she tore open the envelope, glancing through the first page of the letter. Then, with a little choking cry of relief, she sank into a chair and began to cry softly.

It was at least fifteen minutes before Anne appeared in the room, and during that time Grace had wiped away her tears and calmed herself to the point of finishing her father's letter. She looked up smilingly as Anne entered, although her eyes were red. "It is all right, Anne! Father is the most forgiving man! Just listen to what he says:"

"My Dear Grace:—

"There is no use in scolding you. I know

that your intentions were good, above reproach, no doubt, but how many times have I cautioned you to go slowly? I received your letter, but, deciding you deserved a certain amount of punishment for your rashness, purposely delayed answering you. Your fame has traveled the length and breadth of Oakdale, however, as I am not the only man in town who reads the New York papers. In the light of your early police court career I might say that this last bit of sleuthing merely adds to your reputation in Oakdale as an apostle of justice. I forgive you, of course, and do not blame you very severely. You were rather shabbily dealt with, but still you must consider that if you had kept your promise to me this annoying episode would never have taken place.

"Considering your legitimate claim to senior dignity, I am not going to lecture you any further. I am sure you will be more careful another time. We missed our little girl more than I can say on Thanksgiving Day. Your mother and I, who, you will remember, were elected honorary members of the Phi Sigma Tau the summer we went to Europe with that illustrious organization, carried out to the best of our ability your old plan of making some one else happy on Thanksgiving Day. With the help of Miss Thompson, who is a frequent visitor at our

house, we managed to find several high school girls who needed cheering up. We invited them to Thanksgiving dinner and had a little dance in the evening. Your mother will write in a day or two and give you full particulars.

"I hope you enjoyed your trip to New York. I feel rather guilty, now, because I didn't answer your letter at once. We will have one of our good old talks when you come home for the Christmas holidays. Then you may scold me, if you think I deserve it.

"Your mother and I are well, and are looking forward to your home-coming next month. So is half the town, for that matter. Your friends never forget to ask for you, and every day brings its, 'Is Grace coming home for the holidays?' God bless you, my dear child, and bring you safe home to us for Christmas. That is the gift we most desire. With our dearest love,

"FATHER."

Grace's eyes were misty as she looked up from her letter. "Isn't he just too splendid for words, Anne?"

Anne nodded, then, slipping her arm about Grace's neck, she leaned over and kissed her friend's cheek. "I am so glad everything is all right."

"You knew better than any one else how

dreadful it was for me," returned Grace, looking up affectionately at her friend.

"We all know," answered Anne. "I think Elfreda took it even more deeply to heart than we did. She is the soul of loyalty and resents an injury to one of us as much as though it were her own grievance."

"In one way it seems a long time since J. Elfreda Briggs established herself in my seat on the train, yet in another it seems but yesterday," mused Grace. "Can you realize, Anne, that we are almost at the end of our college days?"

"I never allow myself to think of it," confessed Anne. "I've been so happy at Overton I'd like to stay here forever."

"Give up the stage, and apply for a place on the faculty," suggested Grace with apparent earnestness.

"You rascal! You know I couldn't do that even for the sake of being at Overton. I am wedded to my art," proclaimed Anne dramatically.

"Some day you will obtain a divorce from your art and marry a mere man, though," predicted Grace.

The color suffused Anne's white face. Her brown eyes grew troubled. "I don't know whether I shall or not," she murmured.

"Anne, would you leave the stage, give up your work, if—if—" Grace paused.

"If David asked me to marry him?" Anne finished the question calmly. "I don't know, Grace. I've asked myself that question so many times that I am tired of trying to answer it. In fact, I've lately decided to let matters drift and see what happens. Although there has never been a word of sentiment exchanged between us, I am reasonably sure that David loves me, and I am very fond of him," confessed Anne. "In some respects I feel years older than you girls. I believe it is due to my stage experience; I have played so many different parts, some of them emotional roles which have to do with love and renunciation." Anne's musical voice trembled slightly on the last word.

"I am sure David loves you with all his heart," was Grace's honest reply. "Now that he has been graduated from college and has gone into business for himself, I am afraid you will be called upon to decide before long."

"I am afraid so," sighed Anne. "I wish life weren't quite so complicated."

"I hope the rest of our senior year will be free from complications." Grace spoke with grim emphasis. "Why, I forgot to open this letter!" she exclaimed, snatching the unopened letter from the table and tearing at the end of it.

The letter proved to be a penitent little note from Arline asking Grace to forgive her, and prove her forgiveness by taking dinner with her the following evening at Vinton's. Grace felt a thrill of happiness swell within her as she read the note. Her brief estrangement from Arline had been another of her secret griefs.

"I'm going to take dinner with Arline to-morrow night," she announced to Anne.

"You'd better hurry if you care to take dinner with us," called Elfreda from the doorway, in which she had paused just in time to hear Grace's last remark.

"It isn't dinner," corrected Anne. "It is supper on Sunday, and never very good, either."

"We never have Sunday dinner in the middle of the day at home," commented Elfreda.

"When you are at Wayne Hall do as the Wayne Hallites do," quoted Miriam, who had followed Elfreda into the room.

"Where is Patience?" inquired Grace.

"Enjoying the solitude of her room before the disturber arrives," volunteered Elfreda. "She'll be along presently."

Despite the fact that they had had dinner on the train, the four girls decided that they were hungry, and on going downstairs to the dining room where Mrs. Elwood had prepared an unusually good supper, proved it, to their own and

Mrs. Elwood's satisfaction. There were only three girls in the dining room when they took their places, as the majority of the "Wayne Hallites" were spending the afternoon and evening of their last day's vacation with friends. Patience joined them as they were finishing their dessert, and it was laughingly decided to entertain her while she ate, and afterward go for a walk.

"What style of entertainment do you prefer?" asked Elfreda, with a deferential air. "Shall I give you an imitation of Kathleen West's return?"

"No, thank you. The reality will be sufficient," was Patience's dry retort. "I prefer a more pleasant variety of entertainment."

The ringing of the door bell caused those in the dining room to glance expectantly through the doorway into the hall. They heard the maid's voice, then a cry of "At last!" and Emma Dean fairly charged into their midst.

"I never was so glad to see any one in all my life," she cried, with a joyful wave of her hand. "How I have missed you while you have been gallivanting about New York without giving the friend of your freshman days a thought. You might have sent me a postcard, you know."

" 'Gallivanting' is not the word with which to

describe our triumphal march around New York," objected Elfreda.

"It's a very good word," defended Emma. "It means to roam about for pleasure without any definite plan. It says so in the dictionary."

"Every day adds to our store of knowledge," jeered Elfreda.

"As I am at present overjoyed to see you, I'll try hard not to squabble with you." Emma turned her back squarely upon Elfreda and addressed Anne. "I heard something while you were gone that will interest you, Anne. The senior class are talking of presenting a play. If we do, you will star in it, of course."

"I can't, Emma," returned Anne regretfully. "My professional experience prevents me from taking part in college plays. If Semper Fidelis, or some of the girls, were to put on a play for our own amusement, then I could take part, but in regular college plays professionals are barred here at Overton. It is practically the same rule that applies to college sports."

"Oh, that is too bad! But it wouldn't hinder you from writing one, would it?"

"I couldn't write a play. I used to hope that I might some day become a writer. But I know now that it isn't in me."

"But many actors and actresses have been writers, too," put in Elfreda.

"I know it. Still, the most successful plays have been written by men and women outside the profession," argued Anne. "I wish I could write, but I know my limitations and they stop this side of authorship. But why did you ask me if I could write a play, Emma?"

"Marian Cummings gave a spread the other night to all the seniors on the campus who weren't lucky enough to get away from Overton for Thanksgiving. We were talking about what the senior class might do in the way of stunts, and some one proposed that we ought to give a play after midyears. You know our class has never done anything of the sort since we entered college. Naturally, we were all in favor of the idea. We all agreed that we wanted something besides Shakespeare for a change, but no one could suggest anything else. We wanted something really representative, and the majority of these plays for amateurs are rather trivial. Finally, Sara Emerson suggested that the play be written by a member of the senior class. There was a general protest, and Elizabeth Wade asked Sara if she would mind writing it. Rather unkind in her, wasn't it?" asked Emma, with a reminiscent chuckle.

Her friends laughed with her. The mere idea of frivolous little Sara Emerson as a playwright was distinctly amusing.

"Sara didn't mind our laughing. She and Julia giggled over it, too. Then Marian Cummings suddenly thought of a splendid plan." Emma paused in order to impress her hearers.

"For goodness' sake, go on, Emma," begged Miriam. "Don't ask us to guess the plan, either."

"I'm not going to ask you to guess it. I stopped talking merely to allow my words to sink deeply into your minds. Marian wants to make it an honor competition affair."

"What's an 'honor competition affair'?" asked Elfreda.

"I'm surprised at your question. I should think you 'could see' the meaning from the words themselves," teased Emma. "You see almost everything."

"I'll be revenged on you for that thrust," threatened Elfreda, joining in the laughter that greeted Emma's remark.

"Do you mean that any member of the senior class may compete, not for a money prize, but for the honor alone?" asked Grace.

"That is precisely my meaning," said Emma. "We thought we would have an honor pin made, something worthy of the girl who wins. The class will give her a supper and drink her down, and there will be various demonstrations and jollifications for her especial benefit."

"Why not give the four classes a chance, and make it a competition worth remembering?" proposed Elfreda, a peculiar expression in her shrewd eyes. "I mean that the cast would be chosen from the senior class, but the author might be any girl in college."

No one answered for a moment. "I don't believe," began Emma doubtfully, "that we—— What do you say, Grace? Of course, we shall be obliged to call a special class meeting, but we can decide now just how to word our proposal. Whatever you decide will suit us."

Grace's glance had remained fixed upon Elfreda as though trying to read her thoughts. What did Elfreda have in mind? Then it dawned upon Grace with unpleasant force. "She wants Kathleen West to have a chance to compete." Then, "If I say I think we ought to keep the contest in the senior class, the girls will agree with me. This is my chance. She would dearly love to enter a contest of this kind. Very well. I'll see that she doesn't enter it." For the first time in her life Grace's resentment blinded her sense of fairness. Her lips tightened unpleasantly.

"I say that we ought to——"

But Grace did not finish her sentence. Swift and overwhelming came the conviction that here perhaps lay the means by which Kathleen might

come into a knowledge of the real Overton spirit. In writing the play, for Grace felt certain that the newspaper girl would enter the lists, she might gain what her classmates had been powerless to give her. Grace's face grew hot with shame at her own unworthiness of spirit.

"Why don't you finish?" asked Emma Dean with good-natured impatience. "What ought we to do? We shall never know unless you speak and tell us."

The steady light in Grace Harlowe's gray eyes deepened. Her moment of temptation had passed. Her love of fair play had conquered. "Include the whole college, by all means. Let us make it an Overton rather than a class affair, and let us call a meeting of the senior class tomorrow afternoon," she said. "Let us settle it as soon as possible."

"I'll write a notice the moment I finish my supper," declared Emma. "Come upstairs to my room, all of you, and watch me write it. I can always write better if I have an audience; provided it is a kindly, uncritical audience," she added, casting a significant glance toward Elfreda, who beamed on Emma as one who has received a compliment.

As they were leaving the dining room a little later, Grace felt a plump hand catch one of

hers. She turned to find Elfreda's gaze bent earnestly upon her. There was a significant question in the other girl's eyes. Grace pressed the hand and said in a whisper: "I understood, Elfreda. Thank you for showing me the way."

CHAPTER XVII

WHAT THE SENIORS THOUGHT OF THE PLAN

"I CAN'T forgive myself for being so disagreeable," was Arline Thayer's regretful cry. Grace had met Arline half an hour earlier than the time appointed for the senior class meeting the following afternoon and the two girls had hurried to the room in Overton Hall, where the meeting was to be held, for the express purpose of having a confidential chat before the others should arrive.

"Don't think of it again, Daffydowndilly." Grace regarded Arline with affectionate eyes. She was glad almost to the point of tears that the cloud between her and the dainty little girl had been lifted.

"Oh, but I must think of it this once, Grace," persisted Arline. "I haven't told you yet how truly sorry I am for behaving so badly toward you. But I was so angry with you for troubling yourself about that horrid Kathleen West. But first let me ask: Did you see that New York newspaper story? Father sent me a copy of the paper. I showed it to Ruth, but didn't tell any one else. It is known here, though."

"Yes, I knew of it the day after it was pub-

lished," answered Grace soberly. "Mabel sent me a marked copy. I am sorry my name was used. It was a surprise to me."

Arline's eyebrows lifted. "A surprise!" she exclaimed with fine sarcasm. "I think I can understand just how pleased you felt over that surprise. I am not going to allow a certain person to come between our friendship again, but I can't help saying that if ever you speak to her again, you will be doing yourself a great injustice."

"Would it surprise you to hear me say that I am inclined to endorse what you have just said?" questioned Grace. "What I tried to do for her was done largely to please Mabel Ashe. Mabel has released me from my promise. I seldom take violent dislikes to persons I meet, but, to tell the plain truth, I have never liked Miss West, although I have admired her ability and perseverance. In fact, I have never met any one I disliked so much," confessed Grace. "I don't know what has come over me, but I simply can't endure the thought of her, let alone forgiving her."

"I don't blame you. I hope you will continue to take that stand. You won't, though. If you knew, to-morrow, of something that would be to her advantage to know, you wouldn't hesitate to tell her."

Grace looked rather confused. Arline's chance shot had gone home. She had not forgiven Kathleen, yet only yesterday she had paved the way for her to possible honor. "What did you do here on Thanksgiving?" she asked abruptly. "Why didn't you go to New York?"

Arline laughed. "I am perfectly willing to change the subject and answer both your questions. Father was in Chicago, so we thought we'd stay here and see what we could do for some of the girls whose good times are limited. We did all sorts of little stunts. Thanksgiving night we gave a party at Morton House and invited every one we could think of, and the next night Ruth and I took our checks, we each received an extra one for Thanksgiving, and gave a moving picture party. We made the man who owns the place reserve the seats, and we saw 'The Merchant of Venice.' It was beautifully done, and every one who saw it was delighted. Then we invited several girls to Morton House for Thanksgiving dinner, too."

"I wanted to ask you and Ruth to go to New York with us, but——"

"Don't say a word," interrupted Arline, with a penitent little gesture. "It was my fault. I claim the privilege of changing the subject, too. What is the object of this class meeting?"

Grace was about to explain, when a murmur

of voices in the hall announced that the seniors had begun to gather for the meeting. Within ten minutes every seat in the room was occupied, and Arline Thayer, now president of the senior class, called the meeting to order. "As there is no particular business to be transacted," announced Arline, "what is the pleasure of the class? Will the person or persons responsible for the notice on the bulletin board please rise and enlighten the class as to why we are here?"

"Madam President," Emma Dean rose from her seat and addressed the chair, "I wrote the notice. It was the outcome of a session in which a number of the seniors had been discussing ways and means of making 19— famous in the annals of Overton." Emma proceeded in her clever, humorous fashion to lay before the class the project of a play to be written by a member of one of the four classes and produced and enacted by the seniors. "If we allow any girl in college who wishes to compete for the honor pin we shall have a greater variety of plays from which to choose. It will also be a good opportunity to discover any lights that might otherwise be so securely hidden under bushels of modesty that no one would ever see them.

"The rules for the contestants will be very simple. The play must be original. It must

consist of not less than three acts, and all manuscripts must be in the hands of the committee appointed by the president of the senior class on the Tuesday before the Easter vacation. The play may be comedy, drama, or tragedy, but it must be representative. The duties of the committee will be to receive the plays. As soon as they have been submitted they are to be turned over to three members of the Overton faculty, provided they are willing to act in the capacity of critics. I should now like an opinion from the class."

Emma sat down amid an energetic clapping of hands. To a member, the class was in favor of the proposed contest. One after another the members rose to voice their approval, and when the president called for a rising vote every member was instantly on her feet.

"You understand that we shall require permission from the president of the college before we can officially announce the contest," Arline reminded the class. "I will appoint Miss Dean, Miss Harlowe and Miss Wade to call upon the president and obtain his permission. Then the play committee will see to the advertising of the contest."

Before the meeting closed, Anne Pierson, Miriam Nesbit, Ruth Denton and Elfreda Briggs were appointed to serve on the play

committee and the date of the production of the play was set for the Friday of the fifth week after the Easter vacation. It was also decided that Lecture Hall, which boasted of a stage and several sets of scenery, and would hold a goodly audience, should be used for the occasion.

Within the next three days Miss Duncan and Dr. Hepburn, instructors, respectively, in English and Latin, and Dr. Darrow, professor of Oratory and Dramatic Expression, had been interviewed and had consented to act as judges. The moment these preliminaries had been attended to, Gertrude Wells had begun an elaborate poster to hang above the bulletin board in Overton Hall announcing the contest. At the bottom of the poster was fastened a card on which the rules had been painstakingly lettered in black and red. By the end of the week there was scarcely a girl in Overton who had not stopped before the gayly colored poster to read the news that was being discussed long and earnestly throughout the college.

Those who had acquired a certain amount of reputation in the matter of themes boldly announced their intention of competing for the honor pin, while there were others whose themes had never been praised, whose ambition to show the judges what they really could do urged them on to enter the lists.

Neither Grace, Miriam nor Anne intended to try for the prize. Ruth Denton had confided to Arline that she had an idea for a play which she meant to work out, and Emma Dean boldly proclaimed herself to be deep in the throes of a comedy called "Life at Wayne Hall; or, the Expressman's Surprise." Elfreda, too, had apparently been inspired, and for a week went about chuckling to herself and making mysterious notes in a little black note book she now carried constantly.

Grace could not help wondering now and then if Kathleen West would enter the contest. Since the newspaper girl's return from New York she had kept strictly to herself. She spoke to Patience only when absolutely necessary and took not the slightest notice of Miriam, Anne or Elfreda. Patience confided to Grace that Kathleen studied harder than ever, and wrote for at least two hours every night, never forgetting to place her papers carefully in her desk and to lock it securely before going out or to bed. "I believe she is writing a play, but I don't know positively and I wouldn't dream of asking her," had been Patience's comment.

As the long intervening days that lay between the students of Overton and "going home for Christmas" dragged by, Grace found herself more impatient to see her father and mother

than ever before. "It is on account of that old newspaper trouble," she assured herself. "Father and Mother were so dear and forgiving over it that I can't wait to see them." All her thoughts were now centered on going home.

"I never wanted to see Father and Mother so much in all my life as I do this Christmas. Next week seems ages off. I am sure it is seven years instead of seven days until vacation begins." She confided to Anne one evening, as she sat on the floor beside her open trunk: "I'm going to begin packing to-night and do a little each day. It will give me a certain amount of satisfaction and make the time pass more quickly. I wonder why Mother doesn't write? She hasn't sent me my check to go home with yet. I can't go home until it comes, for I have spent every cent of my allowance and my extra check, too, for Christmas presents."

"Don't worry over it," advised Anne. "Your father and mother are the most infallible persons I know. You won't be left stranded in Overton and have to walk ties to Oakdale."

"If I do, I shall take you with me. As a trouper you ought to be proficient in that exercise," laughed Grace.

"As a successful exponent of the dramatic art," began Anne pompously, "I——"

"Miss Pierson! Miss Pierson!" Mrs. El-

wood's voice was heard in the hall at the foot of the stairs.

Anne sprang to the door. "Here I am, Mrs. Elwood," she called, stepping down the hall to the head of the stairs.

"Here's a telegram for you. Will you please come downstairs and sign for it?"

Anne hurried down the stairs, her heart beating violently. She signed the messenger boy's book, shoved the pencil into his hand and ran back to Grace as fast as her feet would carry her.

"It's a telegram, Grace. It's for me. I'm afraid to open it," she cried, dashing into the room. "Open it. I dare not. Oh, if anything has happened to Mother or Mary!"

Grace took the envelope Anne held out to her. Her own hands were trembling with apprehension, yet she managed to tear open the envelope and draw out the fateful message. There was the crackling sound of unfolding paper, then Grace cried out in joyful tones: "Anne, you never can guess! It is too good to be true!"

Anne sprang to her feet, and darting to where Grace stood, the open telegram in her hands, peered over her shoulder. A moment later she and Grace joined hands and performed a joyful dance about the room.

"What on earth is the cause of all this jubi-

lation?'' queried Miriam's voice from the doorway. ''I knocked, but no one paid any attention to me. It sounded from the outside as though you might be engaged in deadly conflict, so I decided to interfere.''

The dance ceased and Grace thrust the telegram, which she still held, into Miram's hands. ''Read it,'' she commanded.

''Will arrive in Overton 5:30. Meet me. With love. Rose Gray.''

And, reinforced by Miriam, the dance was begun again with renewed vigor.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE FAIRY GODMOTHER'S VISIT

THREE excited young women burst in upon Elfreda, who, seated on the floor before her trunk, hastily deposited a large flat package in the tray and slammed down the lid. "Why didn't you knock?" she grumbled, looking mild displeasure at the intruders. "If you had come five minutes sooner you would have seen your Christmas presents, and I couldn't have stopped you. I'm going to have a 'Busy, Keep Out' sign made to hang on the door until Christmas."

"Don't be cross, J. Elfreda Briggs," laughed Grace. "We have something nice to show you." She handed the telegram to Elfreda with: "We want you to go to the station with us this afternoon. The train is due at five-thirty."

Elfreda's round face flushed at this mark of thoughtfulness on the part of the girls she adored, and agreed almost shyly to make one of the party. She had never become quite used to the knowledge that these three young women had long since accepted her as one of their number. Consequently an invitation to participate in their personal good times or to share their

intimate friends was always a matter of wonder to her.

The train was reported to be on time, but the quartette of happy-faced young women who waited impatiently for its arrival from the north that afternoon were agreed that it must be late. It was Anne who, when it rushed into the station, first espied the familiar figure of the snowy-haired old lady who had brought so much sunshine into her life, and her quick eyes also discovered the identity of the tall, broad-shouldered young man who was helping her down the car steps. "Oh, Tom Gray is with her!" she exclaimed in delight.

"How nice!" cried Grace, with frank, unembarrassed pleasure. "I never thought that he would come with Mrs. Gray."

Her three friends exchanged significant glances. It was quite evident that Grace Harlowe's regard for Tom held nothing of the sentimental.

"Here they are! Here are my dear Christmas children!" Mrs. Gray looked no older than when she had welcomed them to her house party eight Christmases before. She spoke in the same sprightly manner, and smiled in the same kindly, gentle fashion that had warmed the heart of Anne Pierson when, poor and unknown, she had placed her hand in Mrs. Gray's at that

first eventful freshman tea which was the beginning of happiness for her. Anne's brown eyes filled with tears as she embraced her "fairy godmother" and heard her murmur, "My own dear Anne."

"Please give Aunt Rose a chance to catch her breath and turn your attention upon me," was Tom's plaintive plea.

"We are terribly, horribly, dreadfully glad to see you!" laughed Grace, shaking Tom's hand in her boyish, energetic fashion.

" 'Terribly, horribly, dreadfully!' " repeated Tom. "Did you say this was your last year in college?"

"Don't be sarcastic," reproved Miriam. "Circumstances alter English. Grace was only trying to convey to you our deep appreciation of your arrival."

Tom glanced almost wistfully at Grace, who had turned from him and was devoting her whole attention to Mrs. Gray. "I hope you girls are as glad to see me as I am to see you," he said, his eyes still upon Grace.

"Of course we are. How did you happen to think of coming to Overton? Are you going to stay until next Wednesday? If you do, then we can all journey to Oakdale together."

"Ask Aunt Rose. I am her faithful bodyguard. I know she intends to stay until to-mor-

row at least. I hope you can persuade her to remain at Overton until you go home. I am a working man now, you know, and Washington is a long way from here." Tom's ambition to make forestry his life work had been in a measure realized, and with his graduation from college had come the offer of a position in the Department of Forestry at Washington.

"Yes, children, dear, I will remain in Overton until your vacation begins if the town boasts of a comfortable hotel where I can not only demand, but receive, good service."

"The 'Tourraine' is the very hotel for you, Mrs. Gray," said Grace. "We stayed there for a day or two when we first came to Overton. The service is excellent."

"Then see to my luggage, Tom, and find me a cab or an automobile. The sooner I am settled the sooner I can hear what my girls have been doing. I have heard very nice things of you, my dear," she said to Elfreda, who, having shaken hands with Mrs. Gray, stood at the outer edge of the little group, looking on with shining eyes.

"She looks like a piece of Dresden china," was Elfreda's remarkable statement to Miriam as the little company, headed by Grace and Tom, made its way to the other side of the station in search of an automobile.

"You funny girl," Miriam laughed softly, "what an idea!"

"But she does," persisted Elfreda in a low tone. "She's white and pink and fine and—and—fragile. She's dainty and exquisite, and there's a kind of rare china look about her that——"

"I am going to tell her you said she looked like a piece of Dresden china," interposed Miriam. "Mrs. Gray——"

"If you do, Miriam Nesbit, you'll be sorry," warned Elfreda, clutching Miriam's arm.

"What is it, my dear?" answered the old lady. They had come to a halt at the end of the platform and were waiting for Tom to secure a car.

Elfreda surveyed Miriam with a threatening glare.

"Elfreda says that you"—she darted a mischievous glance at her friend—"look just as she imagined you would."

Elfreda's expression was a mixture of surprise and relief.

"Then you are not disappointed in me," smiled the old lady.

"I should say not!" was the quick response. "I only hope you will adopt me some day as one of your children."

"That is very sweet in you, my child," de-

clared Mrs. Gray. "I hereby adopt you on the spot. Ah, here is our car. I think we are more than ready for it."

"Now that you've been adopted," muttered Miriam in Elfreda's ear, "I won't betray you."

"Thank you for nothing," flung back Elfreda.

"Tell the chauffeur to drive past Overton College," Grace had requested Tom, and Mrs. Gray had exclaimed in admiration of stately Overton Hall, standing like a sentinel in the midst of the wide campus. The chapel, the library, Greek Hall, Science Hall, in fact, each one of the smaller, but equally ornamental, buildings were duly pointed out and commented upon.

Mrs. Gray insisted that they should be her guests at dinner at the "Tourraine," and after dinner they repaired to the cozy sitting room in her suite of rooms for a long, confidential chat, which lasted until after ten o'clock.

"Hurry, girls," urged Grace, as they set out for Wayne Hall, after repeated promises to call the next morning and prolonged good nights, "we may be locked out. That has never happened to me since I came to college."

"That is better than being locked in," reminded Elfreda grimly.

"You mean the night of the ghost party, don't you?" asked Miriam, referring to an in-

cident that had occurred in Elfreda's freshman year.

"I do, indeed, mean the ghost party," retorted Elfreda with grim emphasis. "I still have a remarkably clear recollection of it."

"What a lot of things have happened since then," said Anne, half musingly.

"Only a little while and our college life will be over," sighed Miriam.

"And our real life begun," was Grace's hopeful reminder. "After all, college is just a preparation for the time when we must stand upon our own ground and assume the complete responsibility of our own lives."

"You girls give me the blues," grumbled Elfreda. "I don't want to think about my 'real life' or any other solemn old subject. There's a time to reflect, but this isn't the time. I'd rather save all my harrowing reflections until just before commencement. Then we might give a misery party and invite our friends to glower and gloom with us."

"That's a good idea!" exclaimed Grace. "We could all be miserable together."

"If we all met together for the express purpose of being miserable, you can make up your mind that the party itself would defeat its object," laughed Anne.

"But just at present we had better be gay

and gleeful. We must plan something for Mrs. Gray's entertainment," suggested Miriam. "It is our lawful senior duty to see that she enjoys her visit to Overton."

"She wishes to meet Dr. Morton and Miss Wilder and Miss Duncan, too," said Anne. "She mentioned it twice this evening. We must give a dinner in honor of her at Vinton's, and a luncheon at Martell's. Then we ought to drive out to Guest House for supper. Of course, we must give one spread in either our room or Miriam's and do stunts."

"Why not give the Wonderland Circus just for her?" proposed Elfreda. "Miss Wilder will let us have the gymnasium for the evening, and by making it strictly a senior class affair there will be no hurt feelings on the part of the other classes. Nearly all the performers are seniors, too. We can serve refreshments, have a dance afterward, and Mrs. Gray will have a splendid opportunity to see 19— together. How is that for a stunt?"

Elfreda's plan was received with acclamation, and by the time they reached Wayne Hall each girl had been assigned her part in the week's programme.

"We mustn't forget our Christmas girls," reminded Anne, as they lingered for a brief moment in the upstairs hall.

"I am glad you mentioned them," replied Grace. "I must see Arline to-morrow."

The first week of December had dragged, but the next two weeks raced by on winged feet, and the two days before college closed for the holidays were crowded to the brim with last duties and pleasures. Mrs. Gray won the united regard of the Semper Fidelis Club, who immediately enlisted themselves in her service. The genial, light-hearted old lady entered into the life of the college with an enthusiasm that caused her at once to be declared an honorary member of Semper Fidelis. She was the guest of honor at luncheons and dinners, at which she was toasted and sung to with a fervor that left no doubt in her mind as to her standing with Grace's classmates.

The Wonderland Circus had been saved as the crowning event of her visit, and invitations had been sent to Mr. Thomas Redfield, the benefactor of Semper Fidelis Club, Dr. Morton, Miss Wilder and the various members of the faculty to be present at the Circus. Never had the immortal animals been in better form. Round after round of applause greeted the conclusion of their famous Wonderland song. The demonstration continued until Alice stepped forward and made a funny little speech, in which she introduced the animals, who skipped, waddled or

shuffled forward according to each one's conception of what its own peculiar gait should be.

Emma Dean, who had not taken part in the Circus, appeared in her ridiculous Sphinx costume, and, after a monologue that elicited constant laughter, added to her ability as a fun maker by the weirdly funny dance that she had intended to give at the bazaar, and which she was obliged to repeat before her audience was satisfied.

A reception followed, and delicious buffet refreshments were served by the seniors in one corner of the big gymnasium, which had been roped off with the senior colors and made as attractive as senior hands could make it. Mrs. Gray was in her element and held court like a veritable queen. Before the evening was over the senior class, to a member, had vowed eternal allegiance to her. Dr. Morton, Miss Wilder and Mr. Redfield, too, apparently succumbed to her spell, for toward the close of the evening they formed an interesting group about her, and, at the end of a lengthy confab, shook her hand with an earnestness which seemed almost to indicate a promise of loyalty. To Grace, Anne and Miriam Mrs. Gray's long conversation with the faculty was merely a further proof of her ability to make friends, but the watchful Elfreda regarded the matter from a different viewpoint.

"I wonder what Mrs. Gray was talking about to Professor Morton, Miss Wilder and our fairy godfather?" she remarked in a speculative tone to Miriam as they prepared for sleep late that night. "Fairy godfather is a good name for Mr. Redfield, isn't it?" she laughed.

"Certainly it is," returned Miriam. "I always bestow appropriate names upon people. Isn't he the fairy godfather of Semper Fidelis and didn't I give him that name after he sent us the first check?"

"He is," admitted Elfreda, "and you did."

"What is on your mind now?" asked Miriam. "What do you find so mysterious in the fact that Mrs. Gray held discourse with the powers that be?"

"You can make fun of me if you like," said Elfreda, smiling a little, "but I know what I saw with my own eyes. There is a conspiracy on foot among those persons. It's a delightful conspiracy, of course, but mark my words, they are planning something, and some day when the whole thing comes to light you'll say, 'You were right, J. Elfreda,' see if you won't."

"I will say it now if you wish me to," laughed Miriam, "merely to show you that I have faith in your marvelous powers of observation."

"Thank you," returned Elfreda. "There is nothing like being appreciated. But under the

circumstances I am afraid I can't pursue my usual methods of investigation. If Mrs. Gray is planning something delightful, you may be sure it is for her Christmas children, and J. Elfreda Briggs will not be the one to pry into the surprise."

CHAPTER XIX

WHAT PATIENCE OVERHEARD

"O H, Overton, our voices clear
Ring out in reverent praise to-day,
To thee, our Mother, loved and dear
Who guides us on our college way,"

sang Grace softly as she walked about her room putting away the various articles of wearing apparel she had taken from her trunk. The Christmas vacation had come and gone like a glad, happy dream, and with a hundred pleasant memories of home to sweeten the days that lay between her and Easter, Grace cheerfully unpacked her belongings, humming as she worked the song of Overton that she loved best.

A light knock on the door, accompanied by, "May I come in?" hushed the song on Grace's lips. "I should say so," she called, recognizing Patience Eliot's voice. "Enter and give an account of yourself. I've hardly seen you since I came back."

"I have had more or less unpacking to do, too," said Patience, with a comprehensive glance about the room. "Also deep in my soul lurks the fear of the fateful midyear with its

burden of exams. I am conducting a general review every night for the benefit of Patience Eliot, but it is rather up-hill work. I envy you high and mighty seniors, whose days and nights of anxiety are past."

"I don't believe you are half as much worried as you pretend. Patience Eliot is far too valiant to be downed by a mere examination."

"It is all very well to talk," grumbled Patience, "but you know just how footless mere talk is. I'm not at all sure that I shall not flunk."

"You won't, so don't try to make me believe you will," assured Grace, "and you are going to forget your books and have dinner with me at Vinton's to-morrow night, too."

"Am I?" asked Patience. "Let me see. Oh, yes, I am. It is on Wednesday evening that the great event takes place."

"What great event?" asked Grace with unthinking curiosity. "I beg your pardon, Patience, I didn't mean to——"

Patience dismissed Grace's attempt to apologize with a wave of her hand. "Oh, that is all right. It is what I came here to tell you. You may believe it or not, but Kathleen West has actually invited me to go to that illustrated lecture on 'Mexico' at the Overton theatre on Wednesday evening."

"And you are going?" Grace could not keep a slight constraint from her tone. Her resentment against the newspaper girl still lived. Despite the long, intimate talk she had with her father, she could not quite forget that Kathleen had been partly responsible for the unhappy hours she had spent before going home to Oakdale.

"Yes," Patience replied. There was a note of finality in her voice. "I believe it is best, Grace. In fact, I am sure it is."

Grace stood staring moodily at Patience. A struggle against her own personal feelings was going on within her. Suddenly her face cleared, and with a little, rueful smile she held out her hand to the other girl. "I'm truly glad you are going with her, Patience. I thought I wasn't, but I am. I can't imagine why I don't outgrow my resentment against that girl. I don't understand myself lately."

"I knew you would agree with me." Patience still held Grace's hand in hers. "Now that the ice has been broken—you know you asked us not to mention Kathleen to you—I can say something I've wanted to tell you for a week. There has been a slight change for the better in Kathleen since Christmas. I don't know what has brought it about, but she is less hard and bitter than she used to be. She is terribly blue,

though, and the other day I came into the room and found her crying. Just imagine Kathleen West in tears if you can. She wiped them away post haste and I pretended I hadn't noticed that she was crying. One can't sympathize with her, you know. She wouldn't like it. She prides herself on her stoicism."

"I wonder what happened," mused Grace.

"She has been writing every evening on her play," continued Patience, "until last night. I was hard at work on my Horace, when suddenly she said, 'Oh, what's the use?' and began tearing up everything she'd written. 'I could see,' to quote Elfreda, that she was in one of her black moods, so I never said a word. I think her conscience is troubling her. Perhaps one of these days she will find herself and surprise all of us."

"I hope so," said Grace without enthusiasm. "By the way, I meant to tell you of Arline's and my plan. We are going to propose that the Semper Fidelis girls give a 'Famous Fiction' masquerade and invite the college. We won't try to make any money this time. Later on we will give a concert. This dance will be just a college frolic, but it will be fun to dress up and mask. There will be plenty of girls who won't attend the affair, but there will be a great many who will come. The gymnasium is large enough

to accommodate a crowd. We'll have dancing, of course, and Semper Fidelis is going to pay for the orchestra out of their own pockets. There won't be any real refreshments, just lemonade and fancy crackers. The real fun will lie in the costumes. Every one who attends must be dressed to carry out the title of some work of fiction, either standard or 'best sellers.' "

"What a jolly idea," smiled Patience. "I know already what I shall choose."

"Good!" exclaimed Grace. "Put on your wraps and go with me to Arline's. I feel as though I must discuss it with her to-night."

Within the next five minutes Grace and Patience were crossing the campus to Morton House.

"I was just getting ready to go to Wayne Hall," declared Arline, as they marched into her room in obedience to her rather impatient "Come in."

"And didn't care to be bothered with visitors," added Patience.

"I thought it was a freshman on the next floor who demands admittance at regular hour intervals. She has the 'crush' habit to distraction. She's a nice girl," added Arline, generously, "even though she bores me frightfully at times, and I wouldn't for anything hurt her feelings. I am glad you came. I was just think-

ing of making you a call. I want to talk over our Famous Fiction dance."

"Why, that is what brought us here!" cried Grace. "We decided that there was no time like the present for talking it over."

"Then, being of the same mind, we shall no doubt accomplish wonders," laughed Arline. "When shall we give it?"

"The sooner, the better," advised Patience. "That is, if you expect the freshmen and sophomores to turn out to it. Midyear examinations are only three weeks off, and by the last of next week every one will be so desperately devoted to reviewing back lessons that the idea of a masquerade won't create an iota of enthusiasm."

"Patience is as level-headed as ever," agreed Grace. "Why not have the masquerade next Monday evening? That will give us a week to decide on our costumes and order our masks. Suppose we ask that poor old woman who keeps the little shop just beyond the campus to order our masks? I'll post a notice on the bulletin board as soon as we have secured Miss Wilder's permission to give the masquerade to the effect that masks can be bought at her shop. She is safe in ordering three hundred at least, and it will mean a small profit to her."

"Grace is always thinking of helping the needy and the downtrodden," declared Arline.

"You are a really truly philanthropist, Grace, and you ought to be a fixture at Overton."

"Please don't, Arline," protested Grace, frowning a little. "I'm not a bit more interested in helping others than are you or Patience. I was just thinking to-day that I had really been selfish. It doesn't seem fair that I should have had such good times when so many girls here have nothing but hard work and worry over money matters."

"Who organized Semper Fidelis and who was the first person to think of our Christmas girls?" demanded Arline.

"You are the president of the Sempers and you collected almost all the presents for our first Santa Claus venture," evaded Grace.

"Let each be wise and wear the prize,
Let each divide the crown,
The deeds of Harlowe and of Thayer,
Are equal in renown.
Stop arguing and get to work,
For that is why we're here,
Don't waste your time in idle words,
The dinner hour is near,"

improvised Patience.

Both girls looked their surprise at this outburst.

"Thank you for your poetic counsel, Patience," said Grace. "Suppose we write down the things to be done in connection with giving the dance."

"Here you are." Arline opened her desk and motioned Grace to the chair before it. "We'll suggest, and you can write."

By the time the girls had finished their plans for the masquerade it was half-past six. "Stay here for dinner," invited Arline.

Grace shook her head. "Thank you, but I have studying to do and letters to write to-night. If I stay here for dinner, I'll reach Wayne Hall at twenty-nine minutes after ten. I know my failings."

"Same here," said Patience. "I am not to be trusted, either. Thank you for the invitation; it is a great temptation. Let us go, Grace, before we succumb to the artful blandishments of this blonde young person and stay in spite of ourselves."

"Come over to-morrow night, Arline," called Grace as they went down the steps of Morton House. Arline had accompanied them to the door. "Bring Ruth with you. Tell her I am sorry I didn't see her to-night."

"I'll see you later, Patience," said Grace as they separated at the head of the stairs. Patience walked slowly down the hall to her room.

The door stood slightly ajar and the room was in darkness, but the sound of a familiar voice caused Patience to halt abruptly.

"I could see," said the voice of Elfreda Briggs, "that something worried you. I know just how sorry you feel, because I went through the same thing myself. But if you could make up your mind to go to her and tell her that——"

"Oh, I couldn't do that." It was Kathleen's voice that interrupted the speaker. "I am sure she must hate me. I never believed that I should care, but I do. If only I could do something to show her that at last I understand what college spirit means."

"Do you really mean that?" There was a note of excitement in Elfreda's voice. "Because, if you do, I have the most splendid idea, and the beauty of it is that you are the only one who can carry it out. Will you——"

But Patience, realizing with a start that she was eavesdropping, waited to hear no more. Turning about she stepped noiselessly along the hall and down the stairs. Entering the living room she found Emma Dean entertaining three girls who were laughing immoderately.

"Hello, Patience!" called Emma. "Come in and listen to my tale of woe. Where was I? Oh, yes, the minute I stepped off the car I realized that I had left my silk umbrella in it. The

car started about five seconds before I did. It was a beautiful race. I passed a fat policeman on the corner, and waved my hand reassuringly at him merely to show that I was not fleeing from Justice. Talk about fast running! I actually surprised myself. I caught up with the car just as it was turning that curve on High Street, and floundered into it, puffing like a steam engine. I made one dash past the conductor, reached the seat where my cherished umbrella still reposed and captured it. The conductor must have thought me hopelessly demented, for I dashed out as the car stopped at the next corner without having paid a cent of carfare or offered a sign of an explanation.

"When I passed the corner where the fat policeman stood, he looked at me with respectful admiration, and said: 'You got that car, lady, didn't you?' and I proudly acknowledged that I did. I was only sorry that there weren't more persons about to appreciate Emma Dean's Two Block Dash."

Patience joined in the laughter that had accompanied Emma's narrative. "How are you getting on with your play, Emma?" she asked.

"I still have the title," returned Emma blandly, "but I can't decide upon my characters. There are so many shining lights at Wayne Hall. You know my play is entitled

"Life at Wayne Hall; Or, the Expressman's Surprise." The only character I've actually decided upon is the expressman. I am obliged to have him because he is in the sub-title. I decided long ago on my opening speech, however. The expressman opens the play by saying, 'I can't wait all day, lady.' Isn't that realistic? So true to life!"

"In the face of such an offering, Emma, I am satisfied that it would be sheer folly for any of us to enter the lists," assured Patience.

"Of course, I don't wish to discourage any of you," deprecated Emma with the droll little smile for which she was noted. "But to give Emma Dean and her wonderful ability as a playwright a rest, what is new?"

"We are talking of giving a masquerade," volunteered Patience.

"Who is included in 'we'?" asked Laura Atkins.

"Grace, Arline and I were talking it over today. We thought of giving a Famous Fiction masquerade."

"What is a Famous Fiction masquerade?" asked Emma curiously.

Whereupon Patience entered into an explanation of the proposed gayety while the girls listened with willing ears. While they were discussing it, Elfreda Briggs appeared in the door-

way and Patience knew that she could now return to her room without running the risk of interrupting a heart-to-heart talk. But she smiled to herself as she thought that while she had been casting about for some way to help Kathleen, Elfreda had found it.

CHAPTER XX

THE MYSTERIOUS "PETER RABBIT"

THE gymnasium had, perhaps, never held a more motley crowd of revelers than on the night of the Famous Fiction masquerade. The faculty, who had been particularly interested in the idea of the masquerade, declared that for originality it was in line with 19—'s usual efforts. They occupied seats in the gallery and amused themselves with trying to guess the identity of the various maskers and the books or famous book characters which they represented.

It had been decided that as so many of the famous book titles did not lend themselves to impersonation, famous characters in fiction might also be impersonated. Therefore, when the longed-for night came round, heroes and heroines, with whose adventures and doings the book-lover's world is familiar, walked about, arm in arm, collected in little groups, or danced gayly together to the music of the eight-piece Overton orchestra, whose members appeared to appreciate the humor of the occasion as keenly as did the faculty.

It was an inspiring sight to watch "Hamlet"

parading calmly about the gymnasium with "Beverly of Graustark," or to watch "Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch" waltz merrily off with "Rip Van Winkle." Every one immediately recognized "The Bow of Orange Ribbon" and "Robinson Crusoe." Meek little Oliver Twist, with his big porridge bowl decorated by a wide white band bearing the legend, "I want some more," was also easy to guess. So were "Evangeline," "Carmen," "The Little Lame Prince," "Ivanhoe," "Janice Meredith," and scores of other book ladies and gentlemen.

There were a few masqueraders, however, whose fictitious identity was shrouded in mystery. No one could fathom the significance of a certain tall figure, dressed in rags, who stopped short in her tracks at frequent intervals, and, producing a needle and thread, sewed industriously at her tattered garments. A black-robed sister of charity, accompanied by a strange figure who wore a shapeless garment painted in dull gray squares to represent stone, and wearing a narrow leather belt about its waist from which was suspended on either side two small andirons, were also sources of speculative curiosity. So was a young woman in white with a towering headdress composed of a combination of the Stars and Stripes and the flag of France. And no one had the remotest

idea concerning the eight white figures who marched four abreast and would not condescend to break ranks even to dance.

"Sherlock Holmes" was there with his violin tucked under one arm and a volume of his memoirs under the other. He evinced a strong preference for the society of "Joan of Arc," while "Sarah Crewe," "Little Lord Fauntleroy," and "Rebecca of Sunnybrook" traveled about together, a seemingly contented trio. "The Three Musketeers" were gorgeous to behold in their square-cut costumes, high boots and wide feathered hats, but the sensation of the evening was "Peter Rabbit," who came to the dance attired in his little blue, brass-buttoned jacket, brown khaki pantaloons and what seemed to be the identical shoes he lost in Mr. McGregor's garden. His mask was a cunning rabbit's head that was drawn down and fastened at the neck by a funny soft tie. Who "Peter Rabbit" was and where he had managed to lay hands on his costume was a matter for discussion that night.

The suspense of not knowing who was who ended with the unmasking after the eighth dance, and amid exclamations and little shrieks of laughter the masqueraders stood face to face.

"Elfreda Briggs! I might have known you would," laughed Arline Thayer, shaking hands

with "Sherlock Holmes," while Miriam Nesbit thankfully lifted "Joan of Arc's" helmet and took off her mask.

"You're a perfectly darling 'Fauntleroy,'" admired Elfreda. "I suppose Ruth was 'Sara Crewe.'"

"Yes," returned Arline Thayer. "Here come those eight white figures!" she exclaimed. "Why, it is Miss Barlowe and her crowd. I don't know yet what they were representing."

"The 'White Company,' of course," declared Elfreda. "There would be no satisfaction in being 'Sherlock Holmes' if I couldn't solve all these puzzles."

"Then live up to your reputation and tell me what famous work of fiction this approaching rag-bag represents," laughed Miriam.

"My powers of deduction were strong enough to pierce the identity of that bundle of rags," grinned Elfreda. "I knew Emma Dean by her walk, but I don't know what she represents. Who and what are you, Emma?" she hailed.

"'Never too Late to Mend,'" chanted Emma, flourishing a large darning needle and attacking her rags anew. A shout arose from the little circle of girls who had formed about her. "There is another still harder to guess than mine. Over there," pointed Emma. "Look, girls!"

"What is it?" chorused half a dozen voices. "Well, I never! If it isn't Grace and Patience!"

There was a concerted rush toward the two girls. "What in the name of common sense is this illustrious combination?" asked Emma. "Why didn't you choose something a little harder."

"We are easy enough to guess," returned Patience loftily. "That is, if you are familiar with standard fiction."

"I'm not. I never was," declared Emma. "Tell us instanter!"

"Allow me to introduce you to the 'Cloister.'" Patience bowed low. "And the 'Hearth.'" Grace saluted the company with a loud jingling of her andirons.

"Oh," groaned Elfreda. "No wonder my powers of deduction failed. Who could guess that Grace was representing a hearth? She looks more like a section of a garden wall or the stone foundation for a new house, or——"

"If my costume looks as stony as that, then I do look like a hearth, and either your eyesight or your imagination is defective," declared Grace in triumph.

"Certainly, you resemble a hearth," agreed Emma Dean. "Now tell me how you like my costume. It took me hours to reduce my wearing apparel to its present picturesque state.

All you girls are screaming successes. But who is 'Peter Rabbit'?"

"I don't know, but I'm going to find out," declared Elfreda. "He, or rather she, carried a package of little cards with a cunning rabbit's head and the name 'Peter Rabbit' on them. I have one here."

"So have I," came from every member of the group.

"Let us find the famous Peter, then offer our congratulations," proposed Patience, with a searching glance at the company.

But the "famous Peter" was not to be found among the throng of gayly attired girls, and there was no little comment among them at his sudden and complete disappearance.

"I wonder what became of 'Peter Rabbit'?" remarked Anne, when, later in the evening, a number of Semper Fidelis girls gathered in one corner of the room to hold an informal session and compare notes.

"Who is 'Peter Rabbit'; or, the Mystery of the 'Blue Jacket'?" declaimed Emma Dean. "Even Sherlock is all at sea, aren't you, Brother Holmes?" Emma Dean laid her hand familiarly on the great investigator's shoulder.

"Don't be too sure that I'm all at sea. I have a theory." Elfreda put on a preternaturally wise expression.

"We'll hear it at once," returned Emma briskly.

"Not to-night. I have other weightier problems on my mind. I have been asked to solve the campus mystery."

"Campus mystery!" exclaimed several voices. "What is it?"

"Walk to the extreme northern end of the campus, then go east one hundred and fifty paces and you will come face to face with the problem," was Elfreda's mystifying answer.

"Oh, I know what you mean," cried Sara Emerson. "The ground has been broken there for some kind of building. We noticed it day before yesterday."

"Right, my child," commended Elfreda patronizingly, "and therein lies the mystery. I have prowled about the vicinity at odd moments ever since the men began working there, but even my powers of penetration have failed."

"Since your curiosity has reached such a height, why don't you ask Miss Wilder to tell you the whys and wherefores of this startling affair?" teased Emma Dean. "I never realized until now what a mysterious process digging a cellar is."

"It isn't the process that's mysterious, it is the object of the process," declared Elfreda, with great dignity.

"Not everyone 'can see' either," interposed Emma innocently.

"The Briggs-Dean rapid-fire conversation team in an entirely new line of specialties," proclaimed Sara Emerson. "Secure front seats for the performance."

"There isn't going to be any performance," flung back Emma. "This is merely a friendly chat, but it ends here and now. I don't propose to court publicity. Come on, Sherlock, let us hie us to the lemonade bowl away from this madding crowd."

Sherlock offered his free arm—his memoirs were securely tucked under the other—and strolled nonchalantly toward the punch bowl, looking as though he were towing an animated rag-bag.

"Doesn't Emma Dean look too ridiculous for words?" laughed Arline Thayer to Grace.

"'Never too late to mend,'" quoted Grace. "I wonder how she ever happened to hit upon the idea. She is a delightful girl, isn't she?"

"Emma Dean? One of the nicest girls at Overton." Arline spoke with enthusiasm. "When I came to Morton House as a freshman, Emma was there, too. I had the most appalling case of the blues, for I didn't for one moment believe that I should ever like college. Emma had the next room to mine. She was so cheerful and

said such funny things that I forgot all about my blues."

"I never knew she had lived at Morton House," said Grace in surprise.

"She was there just two weeks," continued Arline. "Then a freshman, who was an old friend of the Dean family, wanted Emma to room with her at Wayne Hall, and so she left Morton House and has been at the Hall ever since."

"Your loss was our gain," replied Grace. "We couldn't do without Emma at Wayne Hall. She and Elfreda are the life of the house."

Arline smiled to herself. Elfreda and Emma might fill their own particular niches in Wayne Hall, but there was only one Grace Harlowe. "How I shall miss you, Grace," she said with sudden irrelevance to the subject of Emma. "I shall miss you more than any other girl in college, except Ruth, when I go to New York for good and all."

"I forbid you to mention the subject," cried Grace, her fine face clouding. "We mustn't even think of it. Oh, listen, Arline! The orchestra has begun that Strauss waltz I like so well. I'm going to put these clumsy old andirons over in the corner; then we'll dance and forget that we are seniors and must pay the penalty."

It was almost twelve o'clock when the Famous Fiction dance came to a triumphant end, and the illustrious book heroes and heroines wended their midnight way toward their various houses and boarding places. The Wayne Hall girls marched across the campus, Emma Dean parading ahead with outspread arms, her rags flapping about her, giving her the appearance of a scarecrow which had just emerged from a farmer's cornfield.

"There it is! There lies the mystery!" cried Elfreda, pointing toward the northern end of the campus, where considerable headway had been made in digging what appeared to be the cellar of a house. "But Sherlock will unravel the tangled skein!"

"Don't be so noisy!" cautioned Miriam Nesbit. "The real Sherlock wasn't."

"To-morrow will tell the tale," went on Elfreda unabashed, but in a slightly lower key. "First, I shall spy upon the workmen, then I shall collect samples of campus soil and spend the rest of the day deducing."

"I hope you won't overwork," was Emma's solicitous comment. "While you are about it you might deduce the identity of 'Peter Rabbit.' I confess I am curious to know who wore Peter's blue jacket and why she disappeared so suddenly."

"So am I," declared Grace. "We must try to find out, too."

As the merry little party tramped upstairs to their rooms, Grace felt a hand on her shoulder.

"Do you really want to know who 'Peter Rabbit' was?" whispered Elfreda.

"Yes," breathed Grace.

"Then don't tell the girls. It was Kathleen."

"Why didn't she unmask with the rest of us?" demanded Grace, as they reached the head of the stairs.

"Why didn't she?" repeated Elfreda. "I'll tell you why. She didn't wish any of us to know who she was. Can't you see? She wanted to be one of the crowd and she was afraid the girls wouldn't take kindly to her. She is beginning to feel that she would like to be liked, and," Elfreda raised one hand, her index finger pointing upward, " 'There is hope.' "

CHAPTER XXI

WHO WILL WIN THE HONOR PIN?

AFTER the Famous Fiction masquerade a noticeable lull in social activities at Overton ensued. Except for basketball, which always flourished between midyear and Easter, little occurred to break the studious wave that swept over the college. There was one topic, however, that furnished food for endless discussion, and that was the senior play contest. In the beginning a goodly number of girls had entered the lists, imagining that to write a play was an extremely simple matter. After two or three feeble attempts at writing, the majority of them had given up in disgust, and from all that could be learned there were less than twenty contestants who had persevered.

The decision of the judges was to be reserved until after the beginning of the spring term, but the contest closed the Tuesday before the Easter holiday began, and it had been stipulated in the rules that all manuscripts must be in the hands of the judges on, or previous to, that time.

As far as was known, no one from Wayne Hall, save Kathleen West and Elfreda, had en-

tered the contest, and even Patience Eliot was not sure that Kathleen had finished and submitted her play. Several times Patience endeavored adroitly to lead up to the subject, but Kathleen invariably turned the conversation into other channels.

"Patience can't find out whether or not Kathleen West entered the contest," observed Grace. A week had passed since the beginning of the spring term, and Miriam, Elfreda, Grace and Anne were strolling across the campus enjoying the tender beauty of a late April day.

"I imagine she did," said Miriam. "I have an idea she is likely to win, too. I can appreciate her ability if I can't wax enthusiastic over her disposition."

"I am so tired of being asked what my play was about," declared Anne. "Everyone seems to take it for granted that I wrote one. I only wish I were clever enough to write a play or even a sketch."

"The announcement is to be made to-morrow, isn't it?" asked Miriam.

Grace nodded. "Miss Duncan told me yesterday that there had been only fourteen manuscripts handed in. She said at least five of them were really clever. She and the other judges were to meet last night to talk over the matter and make their final decision. It is to be an-

nounced at five o'clock to-morrow afternoon in the gymnasium. Didn't you see the notice on the big bulletin board this morning?"

"The girl who wins will stand a chance of having her head completely turned," said Miriam. "If she is a senior, her class will bankrupt themselves entertaining her, and if she belongs to one of the other classes, her own class will probably prostrate themselves at her feet in a body, not to mention the general adulation that is bound to come to the winner."

"Then I hope I win," was Elfreda's calm statement. "I know I won't, because my play was a comedy, and, besides, I know some one else whose idea for a play was a hundred times better than mine."

"Who is it?" The question came simultaneously from Miriam and Grace.

Elfreda shook her head. "I won't say. The person made me promise I wouldn't tell."

"Then we aren't curious to know," said Grace promptly. "Forget that we asked you."

"Oh, that's all right," assured Elfreda. "You'll know soon enough if she wins the honor."

"What are the latest developments in the campus mystery, Professor Holmes?" laughed Grace.

"There aren't any," responded Elfreda,

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shrugging her shoulders. "I found what I supposed to be a clue, and, careful investigator that I am, ran it down, but it led to nothing. However, I haven't given up. I'll solve the problem yet. The noble name of Briggs shall never be associated with failure."

"Any time before commencement, Elfreda," jeered Miriam. "You might keep it as a parting surprise. We shall need something to help bolster up our courage on that last day when the air is rent with good-byes."

"That isn't a bad idea," commented Elfreda. "Perhaps I will. I wish to-morrow were here. I am more anxious to know who won the honor prize than I am to discover who is responsible for our mysterious campus house."

"What are you girls going to do this evening?" asked Grace, as they reached Wayne Hall and seated themselves on the veranda for a few minutes' further chat before going upstairs to get ready for dinner.

"I am going to see Ruth and Arline to-night," announced Anne. "Will you girls go with me?"

"I can't," said Miriam regretfully. "I have letters to write."

"I'll go," agreed Grace.

Elfreda alone was silent.

"And what has J. Elfreda Briggs on her mind?" questioned Anne.

"I can't go. I have another little investigation to pursue," said Elfreda pompously. "If it turns out well, I may have something to tell you girls."

But that night, when the four chums gathered in Grace's room for a brief social session before retiring, Elfreda shook her head soberly when reminded of her partial promise. "I am sorry, but I didn't say positively that I'd tell you."

"Then it didn't turn out well?" from Miriam.

"No," replied Elfreda shortly, "it didn't."

Three pairs of eyes were fixed inquiringly upon Elfreda. "I didn't promise to tell you anything, you know," she reminded bluntly.

"We are well aware of that fact, my dear Miss Briggs," laughed Miriam. "but we would appreciate your confidence, and having aroused our curiosity you ought to do something to satisfy it."

"All right, I'll tell you," decided Elfreda. "I purposely waylaid Kathleen West as she was going out of the house to-night and walked as far as the library with her. I could see she wasn't yearning for my company, but I wanted to tell her that I knew she was 'Peter Rabbit' at the dance. Well, I told her," continued Elfreda grimly, "but I had hard work doing it. She talked about everything under the sun and

wouldn't give me a chance to say a word. And how she did walk! But I kept up with her. I could see she wanted to get away from me. I told her just as we reached the library steps." Elfreda paused.

"Well, what did she say?" asked Grace almost impatiently.

"She said 'good night' and ran up the library steps like a flash. I don't know whether she was angry or not. I can't see why she should be."

"Here is something at last that Elfreda can't see," murmured Miriam.

"I can see that it will be a long time before I tell you girls anything again," retorted Elfreda, but her smiling face belied her brusque words.

CHAPTER XXII

KATHLEEN'S GREAT MOMENT

BY five o'clock the following afternoon the greater part of the students of Overton College had assembled in the gymnasium to learn who had won the honor pin. Every pair of eyes was fixed upon Dr. Hepburn as he rose from his seat on the platform and faced the gathering of expectant students who were eagerly awaiting his announcement.

"It is with the sincerest pleasure that I rise, this afternoon, to announce that, after due consideration, the judges appointed by the senior class play committee to pass judgment upon the plays submitted have decided in favor of the morality play submitted by Miss Kathleen West, entitled 'Loyalheart; Her Four Years' 'Pilgrimage.' It is, perhaps, the most notable manuscript of its kind that has come within the notice of any member of the committee during a period covering a number of years," continued Dr. Hepburn, "and Miss West is to be congratulated on the merit of her remarkable literary effort. I have also been requested to say that, in the opinion of the judges, the comedy entitled 'A Quiet Vacation,' by Miss J. El-

freda Briggs, was the second choice of the committee."

For an instant after Dr. Hepburn ceased speaking a deep stillness pervaded the gymnasium, then from all sides rose cries of "Kathleen West! Elfreda Briggs! Speech! speech!"

Dr. Hepburn raised his hand for silence, and when quiet had been restored he said, "If Miss Briggs and Miss West are present, will they kindly come to the platform?"

Already Elfreda's three friends were urging her forward. From far back in the gymnasium a little figure was seen to separate itself from its fellows and come hesitatingly forward. When Kathleen West reached the platform and faced her audience she eyed them composedly, although her face grew very white; then she began speaking in a clear, resonant voice:

"I thank you for the honor you have conferred upon me," she said, bowing to the committee, "and to you," she bowed to her audience, "for your tribute of appreciation. I should like to say that in creating the character of 'Loyalheart' I have not drawn upon my fancy, and I know that the many lovable qualities with which I have endowed my heroine are to be found in the girl who served as my inspiration. I refer to Miss Grace Harlowe, of the senior class, whom I consider the ideal Overton girl."

Kathleen's voice trembled slightly on the last sentence. Then she walked quickly down the aisle, accompanied by a burst of applause that made the great room ring.

Grace had listened to Kathleen's little speech with unbelieving ears. Could this be the antagonistic Kathleen West of a few weeks ago? What had wrought this marvelous and unlooked-for change? That Elfreda had won second honors had been forgotten. The attention of the students were focussed on Kathleen. Now repeated calls for "Harlowe! Grace Harlowe!" sounded. Emma Dean and Arline escorted her to the platform.

"I thank Miss West for the honor she has done me, and I thank all of you," she said with a sweet seriousness that went straight to her hearers' hearts. "Although I am afraid I can't lay claim to the splendid qualities Miss West has attributed to me, the knowledge that she has thought me worthy is doubly dear." Then Grace hurried to her place very near to tears, while Miriam affectionately pressed her arm on one side and Anne, on the other, slipped her hand into that of her friend, and thus the three listened to Elfreda's speech.

"That's about the most satisfactory general meeting I ever attended," remarked Emma Dean in Miriam's ear as they stepped outside to

the campus, where groups of girls had halted with a view to hailing their respective friends as they passed.

"I was never more astonished in my life," returned Miriam, in guarded tones. "As for Elfreda, she can't believe that she won second honors. She insists there must have been a mistake."

"It was a general all-around surprise, I believe," confided Emma. "I never dreamed that Kathleen West entertained any such feeling for Grace, and I don't imagine any one else did, either. When is the honor prize to be presented to her?"

"On the night of the play. Now that it is all settled, the play committee had better bestir themselves."

"You are on the play committee, aren't you?" asked Emma innocently.

"You needn't remind me of it," laughed Miriam. "I hadn't forgotten it, and it is plain to be seen that you hadn't. Elfreda, Anne and Ruth Denton are on it, too. Here comes Elfreda, surrounded by an admiring throng. Genius will out. I knew she would do something extraordinarily clever before she wound up her college career."

"We can't find Kathleen West!" exclaimed Elfreda. "She slipped out of the gymnasium

so quietly that no one realized she had gone. We are going over to Wayne Hall after her."

"Where is Grace?" asked Miriam irrelevantly.

Elfreda made a quick, comprehensive survey of the various groups of girls. "Why, I don't see her. She was here——" Something in Miriam's expression caused her to eye her roommate sharply. Miriam shook her head almost imperceptibly.

"That's so," returned Elfreda in a low tone. "You never forget anything, do you, Miriam? I will tell the girls to postpone rushing Kathleen until to-night." Turning to the crowd of girls, who had been too busy talking to notice what had passed between her and Miriam, Elfreda said easily: "Suppose we wait until this evening after dinner, girls. Meet me at the corner below Wayne Hall at half-past seven o'clock and we will call on Kathleen and Grace. Miriam will engage to keep them in the house and we'll have ice cream and cake afterward."

Elfreda's suggestion was well received, and solemnly winking at Miriam, she pursued her triumphal journey across the campus, quite surrounded by her admiring bodyguard.

But while her friends were discussing the outcome of the play, Kathleen West, J. Elfreda and Grace, the last named young woman was

speeding across the campus toward Wayne Hall. As she was about to return to her place among her friends, after making her speech, her alert eyes had seen a small, familiar figure edge toward the side door of the gymnasium, then disappear. Grace surmised that Kathleen had gone directly to Wayne Hall, and without hesitating she hurried after her. But another person had also marked Kathleen's flight, for as Grace ran up the steps of the hall she heard a rush of footsteps behind her, and, turning her head to see who was following her, stopped short, exclaiming, "I might have known that you would be the first to go to her, Patience!"

"That is just what I was thinking of you," smiled Patience. "But you must go first. Wasn't it the most astounding announcement you ever heard. I am not surprised at her winning the honor pin. It is her change of heart that astonishes me. I realized that she had improved, but I never heard of anything like this. I suspect Elfreda Briggs knows more about this miracle than she will admit. I overheard her talking to Kathleen one night. I didn't mean to listen. I was just about to enter the room when I heard something Elfreda said and hurried off as fast as I could go."

"I think Elfreda had a hand in it, too," said Grace, with shining eyes. "What a glorious

success she has made of her four years. Now, one of us must go to Kathleen."

"You go," insisted Patience. "I'll drop in later."

Grace went into the house and upstairs, hardly knowing what to do or say. She knocked gently on Kathleen's door, then at sound of a muffled "Come," turned the knob and stepped inside. Kathleen had thrown herself face downward upon her couch, her face buried in the cushions. Without raising her head, she faltered, "Is it you, Grace?"

"Yes," answered Grace softly, as she approached the couch on which Kathleen lay.

"I knew you would come—you and Patience."

"Patience is downstairs," returned Grace. "She will be here soon."

Kathleen raised herself to a sitting posture. Her eyes were very bright. There was no sign of tears in them. "Grace, can you ever forgive me for all the trouble I have caused you?" she asked solemnly.

"Of course I can, Kathleen," replied Grace, slipping down on the couch beside Kathleen and placing her arm about the slender shoulders of the newspaper girl. "You are not the only one at fault. I blame myself for a great many things that happened. If we had only known

that you wished to be in the circus. We never thought of slighting you, Kathleen."

"I know it now," rejoined Kathleen sadly, "but I was furious with you at the time. Then, too, I had made up my mind not to like you. I thought you priggish and narrow-minded. I didn't understand college in the least. I was ready to ride over every Overton tradition for the sake of having my own way. Patience was the first to show me where I stood, and I tried to see matters from her standpoint. Then came the temptation to publish that 'Larry, the Locksmith' story, and you know the rest.

"Elfreda Briggs was the one who brought me to my first realization of college spirit. She had been watching me all year and discovered that I was unhappy. She marched into my room one night and found me crying. When she left me I was happier than I had been for months. She had shown me the way to atone for some of the mischief I had made. It was she who gave me the idea for the play. I had begun a play, then had destroyed it, resolving to have nothing more to do with the contest. After Elfreda and I had our talk I began again and I wrote 'Loyalheart.' After the Famous Fiction Dance Elfreda came to me again. She was determined to help me."

Grace's face grew radiant when Kathleen

told of Elfreda's part in the affair. A great wave of love and tenderness for the one-time stout girl, who had begun her college life at such a disadvantage, swept over her. "Dear old J. Elfreda," she murmured. "What a wonder she is!"

"But there is one thing I haven't yet told you," said Kathleen. "You are to create the role of 'Loyalheart' in my play. You mustn't refuse. It was written for you, and no one else could possibly play it. Elfreda is going to arrange that part of it with the play committee. Please don't refuse. If you only knew how much it means to me." Kathleen's eyes were fixed appealingly upon Grace.

"I won't refuse," was Grace's gentle answer. "I'll do it just to please you and to cement our life-long friendship." The two girls had risen now, and stood facing each other. Then their hands met in a silent pledge of friendship that was to prove faithful to the end.

Loyalheart stepped into life on the fifth Friday evening after Easter and for two hours and a half her adoring audience of Overton students hung on her slightest word or gesture. From the moment in which Loyalheart left Haven Home on her Four Years' Pilgrimage

she ceased to exist as Grace Harlowe, merging her personality entirely in that of the beautiful allegorical character she was portraying.

The play itself was in four acts, each representing one of the four college years. Written in the form of an allegory, it partook of the nature of a morality play and told the story of Loyalheart's eventful pilgrimage through the Land of College, accompanied by her faithful friends, Honor, Forbearance, Silence and Good Humor. Her heroic efforts to keep her four friends with her in spite of the plots of Snobbery, Gossip, Jealousy, Frivolity and Treachery, and her readiness to extend a helping hand to Diffidence, Poverty and Misunderstood, result in the creation of an illusive being known to her only as the Spirit, a white-robed apparition which visits her more frequently as she approaches the end of her pilgrimage. At the termination of Senior Lane, which is separated from the Highway of Life by the Gate of Commencement, the Spirit, clothed in glittering raiment, appears to Loyalheart, and she learns that in helping others and clinging to her ideals she has fostered and nurtured to radiant growth none other than the fabled College Spirit which she has ardently striven to recognize and possess.

Greatly to her delight, Emma Dean had

been asked to play the part of the Spirit, and exhibited real histrionic ability in the role. As Loyalheart, Grace, who, day after day, had been painstakingly coached by Anne, left nothing to be desired in her portrayal of the role assigned to her. Ruth Denton, Gertrude Wells, and Miriam Nesbit, respectively, enacted the roles of Honor, Forbearance and Silence, while Elfreda insisted on playing Good Humor, and was greeted with appreciative laughter whenever she appeared.

The play was written in blank verse, and many of the passages were extremely beautiful. Loyalheart's farewell to Haven Home and the revelation of the Spirit to Loyalheart at the Highway of Life were particularly worthy of note. The speeches of Good Humor scintillated with wit, and the unpleasant characters in the play were peculiarly true to life. Grace took half a dozen curtain calls, and Kathleen West was also summoned before the curtain and publicly presented with the honor pin by President Morton.

It was an evening long to be remembered, and the story of Loyalheart and her pilgrimage was destined to remain in the minds of the Overton girls for many a day.

It was after eleven o'clock when a very tired Loyalheart went forth on a pilgrimage to Wayne Hall, accompanied by her equally loyal

supporters, who were proudly bearing numerous floral offerings which had been handed to Grace over the footlights.

"I am so tired," she sighed, "but so happy. It was a beautiful play, wasn't it?"

"And you were the nicest part of it," said Anne fondly. "Your portrayal of Loyalheart was wonderful."

"And so was your coaching," retorted Grace, promptly.

"It is far from early," remarked Elfreda in a suggestive tone, as they halted for a moment at the head of the stairs, "but we are all here, and I know how to make fruit punch. In fact, I got the stuff ready, thinking that it might be useful!"

"We will be in your room within the next ten minutes," said Grace decisively. "Such hospitality is not met with every day."

True to her word, ten minutes later she and Anne were seated on the foot of Elfreda's bed, kimono clad and smiling, while Elfreda labored with the fruit punch. Kathleen West and Patience Eliot, who had also been invited to the punch party, were seated on cushions on the floor.

Suddenly the soft tinkle of a mandolin sounded under the window, then a chorus of fresh young voices sang softly:

"Come, tune your lyre to Kathleen West,
Of all the plays hers is the best;
Long may she shine, long may she wave,
Her shrine we deck with garlands brave;
May Fortune bring her world renown—
To Kathleen West, girls, drink her down."

"How perfectly sweet in them!" exclaimed Kathleen, her color rising.

"Hush!" Miriam held up her finger.

"Dear Loyalheart, we sing to you,
O girl so brave and sweet and true,
May life to you be wondrous kind,
And may you all its treasures find;
May skies ne'er threaten you, nor frown—
To Loyalheart, girls, drink her down."

Owing to the lateness of the play no one at Wayne Hall had had time to retire, and, hearing the music, the girls had with one accord hurried to the windows.

"Come on up, Gertrude," called Grace into the soft darkness. "I know your voice. How on earth did you get out of your costume, go home for your mandolin and manage to land under Miriam's and Elfreda's window, all within half an hour?"

"That's easy. We brought our instruments

of torture with us to the play, and Elfreda agreed to have you girls in her room at the time appointed."

"There is fruit punch enough to go round, and dozens of cakes," observed an ingratiating voice over Grace's shoulder.

"We had several more verses to sing, and one for you, Elfreda. If you will ask Mrs. Elwood's permission, we will come up, sing them and incidentally sample the punch and the cakes," stipulated Gertrude.

There were seven girls in the party of serenaders—Gertrude, Arline, Ruth Denton, the Emerson twins, Elizabeth Wade and Marian Cummings. When the last cake had disappeared and the punch was almost gone, the serenading party sang the rest of their verses and departed gayly, yet in spite of their gayety there lurked in each heart the shadow of the parting that was to come all too soon.

CHAPTER XXIII

GRACE FINDS HER WORK

COMMENCEMENT day dawned smilingly, as though anxious to contribute to the happiness of the four chums by putting on its most sunshiny face. A cool breeze swept across the campus, and, according to J. Elfreda Briggs, one didn't really mind being graduated on such a day.

The hotels of Overton were well filled with friends and relatives of the graduates. The Southards, Mrs. Gray, Mrs. Pierson and her daughter Mary, together with Mrs. Allison, Mabel and the remainder of the Eight Originals Plus Two had been staying at the "Tourraine" for the past two days. Elfreda's father and mother had also arrived and were staying at the "Wilton," an old-fashioned hotel near the campus. The four chums found it somewhat of a problem to divide their time equally among their classmates, friends and families. During those last days their opportunities for confidential talks came only at the end of the evening, when, having bade a round of affectionate goodnights, they spent a few moments in either Grace's or Miriam's room before retiring.

"I feel at least a hundred years old to-day," announced J. Elfreda Briggs, as she stood arranging her hair before the mirror preparatory to putting on her cap and gown.

"Yes, you look quite like some grand old ruin," observed Miriam soberly, as she unearthed her slippers from the depths of her closet and hunted vainly about for a shoe horn.

Elfreda laid her comb on the dressing table, grinned her appreciation of this pleasantry, then, giving her smoothly coiffed hair a last pat, reached for her cap. "I am so glad I can wear black without looking like a funeral procession," she observed.

"Hurry, girls," sounded Grace's clear tones outside their door. "It is time we were on our way."

"Coming," called Miriam, springing from the edge of the bed, where she had sat to put on her slippers, and hastily adjusting her cap. In the next instant the four friends accompanied by Emma Dean were hurrying across the campus to the gymnasium, where the senior class were to meet, then proceed in a body to the chapel, where the commencement exercises were to be held.

The little procession of seniors walked two by two to the chapel, and to Grace, who walked with Anne, it seemed the most wonderful moment of

her life. She marked the calm, almost exalted expression which Anne wore. Elfreda and Miriam, looking very stately in their black gowns, were just ahead of her and Anne, while Arline and Ruth Denton were directly behind them. As they walked sedately down the aisle of the chapel to the places reserved for them, Grace's eyes searched the rows of seats for her father and mother, whom she spied when almost opposite them. Just as she passed their row she managed to send one tender little glance to them, which caused their faces to glow with pride as their fond eyes followed the straight, supple figure of their daughter who had so amply fulfilled their expectations.

The exercises, while impressive to the friends of the graduates, were doubly so to the graduates themselves, who were deeply conscious of the fact that their diplomas were their passports into the real world of work and endeavor that was now about to open before them.

At the conclusion of the exercises the usual gifts and endowments to the college were announced. Among them was Thomas Redfield's annual gift to the Semper Fidelis Club, which brought forth a quick tribute of applause from the seniors, which was seconded by the entire assemblage. "And lastly allow me to mention the latest and one of the most acceptable gifts

ever bestowed upon the college," stated President Morton.

Grace bowed her head. She had reached the very end of Senior Lane. A few moments and her college life would be over. She had finished her course. She had kept faith with herself, and now there remained the wide world and her work, whatever that might be. Her reflections were brought to an abrupt end by what President Morton was saying. She raised her head in sudden amazement. "I refer to the newly completed house at the northern end of the campus," she heard, "presented to Overton and endowed by Mrs. Rose Gray as a mark of appreciation of her young friends, Grace Harlowe, Miriam Nesbit and Anne Pierson. It is Mrs. Gray's wish that her gift to Overton College shall be known henceforth and forever as 'Harlowe House.'"

Absolute silence reigned for an instant after this announcement, then the quiet chapel echoed with the applause of the enthusiastic assemblage. President Morton waited until he could make himself heard, then went on to explain more fully that Harlowe House was to be dedicated to the use of those girls who were making a struggle to acquire a college education. Then there was more applause, and Mrs. Gray was asked to address the graduates.

"And to think," said Grace, as, a little later, she stood with Miriam, Anne and Elfreda outside the chapel, surrounded by those she loved, "that I know at last what my work is going to be."

"But we don't know," reminded her father, almost wistfully.

"There is only one thing for me to do," laughed Grace, her eyes shining, "and that is——"

"Oh, I know," interposed Elfreda, "you're coming back to the campus to look after Harlowe House."

"You could see that, couldn't you, Elfreda?" laughed Miriam.

"How did you guess it?" asked Grace. "Yes, I should like to come back if Father and Mother can spare me."

"The rest of her friends don't count," commented Hippy Wingate.

"You know they do, Hippy," smiled Grace. "I must have the permission and good will of all of them if my work is to be a success."

"You have your mother's and my full consent, Grace," said her father loyally.

Grace made a little movement toward her parents, slipping in between them and catching a hand of each. "There is only one thing I can say, and I've said it hundreds of times before.

You are the dearest father and mother a girl ever had."

It was rather a silent quartette that gathered for the last time in Grace's room that night. Emma Dean had left Overton on the evening train. So had Patience Eliot, Kathleen West and Laura Atkins. The sophomores of Wayne Hall had departed before commencement, and to-night the house was very quiet.

"And to-morrow is another day," observed Elfreda.

"So it is, my child," agreed Miriam, "but we shall spend it on the train."

"Do you remember one day, ages ago, when Elfreda Briggs deposited her suit case on Grace Harlowe's feet and made herself comfortable. Wasn't I a vandal?"

"Think what we all might have missed if we hadn't acquired a proprietary interest in Elfreda that day."

"And now you can't lose me. There, that is the first slang I've used for months, and on commencement day, too."

"Never mind, Elfreda. It is forcible at least. But we don't wish to lose you. You must keep your promise and come to Oakdale this summer."

"I will," promised Elfreda; "and now suppose we have one last sad tea party."

It was almost midnight before Miriam and Elfreda went softly down the oppressively quiet hall to their room.

"Are you happy, Anne?" asked Grace, slipping her arm about her friend and drawing her to the window where, dark against the moonlit sky, rose the tower of Overton Hall.

"Almost too happy for words, and yet I dread leaving Overton."

"You must come back next year and visit me. I do hope I shall make a good house mother. Do you know, Anne, in my mind I've already picked out a motto to hang over my door. It is, 'Blessed are they that have found their work.' "

CHAPTER XXIV

CONCLUSION

THE full moon shone down with his broadest smile on the group of young people who occupied Mrs. Gray's roomy, old-fashioned veranda.

"We're here because we're here," caroled Hippy Wingate, balancing himself on the edge of the porch rail, both arms outspread to show how successfully he could sit on the narrow railing without support.

"You won't be 'here' very long," cautioned Miriam Nesbit. "You are likely to land in that rose bush just below you. It's a very thorny one, too. I know, because I tried to pull a rose from it only a little while ago. Remember, I have warned you."

"Don't worry over me, Miriam," declared Hippy airily, pretending to lose his balance and recovering himself with an exaggerated jerk.

"Oh, I am not worrying," retorted Miriam. "If *you* fall backward into that rose bush it won't hurt *me*."

"Did I say it would, my child?" asked Hippy serenely.

"Don't answer him, Miriam," advised Nora.

"He is like Tennyson's 'Brooklet,' he goes on forever."

"How peaceful and quiet it was in Oakdale until yesterday," was Hippy's sorrowful comment. " 'Gone are the days when my heart was light and gay,' etc."

"It will be not merely a case of bygone days, but bygone Hippy as well," threatened David. "Reddy and I intend to defend our friends against your personal attacks."

"I wasn't personal," beamed Hippy. "I didn't say anything about any one. I merely observed that since yesterday Oakdale had become a howling wilderness——"

Hippy did not stop to finish his speech, but, nimbly dodging David and Reddy Brooks, who rose from the porch, determination written on their faces, bounded down the steps and disappeared around the corner of the house.

"He is the same Hippy who made life merry for us eight years ago when we were high school freshmen," smiled Grace. "He hasn't changed in the least."

"None of my Christmas children have changed," was Mrs. Gray's fond retort.

"Neither has our fairy godmother," reminded Anne.

"I never feel grown up or responsible when we all gather home," said Jessica.

"And yet Tom is on his first vacation from work, David and Reddy are rising young business men, and Hippy is studying law," reminded Grace.

"Yes, but I don't like it," remarked a plaintive voice, as a fat face appeared around the corner of the porch. "I want to be a brakeman."

It was impossible not to laugh at Hippy, and, encouraged by the merriment, he cautiously climbed the steps of the porch and returned to his precarious perch upon the railing.

"I want to be a brakeman,
And with the brakemen stay,
I'd ride upon the choo-choo cars
Through all the livelong day,"

he warbled, rocking backward and forward in time to his song.

"Why don't you go down to the railroad yard and put in your application, then?" was Reddy's stolid advice. "If I intended to be a brakeman I wouldn't study law.'

"Alas! I am obliged to obey the wishes of my cruel parents," whined Hippy. "I am seriously contemplating wrapping a few little things in a handkerchief and leaving home forever. I remember once when I was very young and unso-

phisticated I decided upon this step. I was deeply incensed with Father because he had punished me for playing truant from school. I went upstairs to my room and packed three neckties, a boxing glove, two books, a baseball and a picture of myself in baseball clothes in a suit case. I carried the bat, and as a last precaution I took a toy pistol and my bank, which boasted of sixty-four cents. I started at about eight o'clock in the evening and went as far as the summer house at the lower end of our grounds. I sat down to rest, went to sleep and woke up about two o'clock in the morning. Then I discovered that I was afraid of the dark and didn't dare go even as far as the house. I crept into the summer house and stayed there until morning; then I went home, suit case and all. I managed to get into the house before any one else was up, but I decided there were worse places than home. However, if the brakeman aspiration proves too strong I may be obliged to leave home again. After all, it may be my vocation."

"Hippy Wingate, when will you be sensible?" asked Nora O'Malley.

"Never, I am afraid. You see, my associations tend to make me foolish. Birds of a feather, you know, and when one's intimate friends——" Hippy paused. "You understand

I don't like to say that you in particular are responsible, but——"

"I'll never forgive you for that," declared Nora.

"Then that means that our engagement——"

Hippy was not allowed to finish. A shout went up from the others, and he and Nora were surrounded.

"Hippy, how could you?" The pink in Nora's cheeks deepened, but she did not deny his statement.

"Nora, come here," commanded Mrs. Gray.

Nora obeyed with a shyness entirely foreign to her. Putting her finger under Nora's rounded chin, Mrs. Gray looked smilingly into the piquant face. Then she drew the girl within her circling arm and kissed her. Grace, Miriam, Anne and Jessica followed suit.

"Now it is your turn, Jessica and Reddy," said Nora pointedly.

Jessica's pale face grew scarlet. She looked appealingly toward Reddy, who sat beside her, then they rose and, taking her hand in his, Reddy said with a world of affection in his voice, "Jessica has promised to marry me in the fall." Jessica and Reddy were immediately surrounded.

"Will surprises never cease?" exclaimed Grace, regarding her betrothed friends with lov-

ing eyes. "Now I begin to believe that we have really grown up."

"*You* haven't," retorted Tom Gray in a low tone which Grace alone heard.

"Give me a year or two in which to do my work, and perhaps I will," said Grace softly.

"Do you really mean that, Grace?" asked Tom eagerly.

"I think I do, Tom," hesitated Grace, "but I can't promise you what you wish, yet."

"By the low, significant tones over in Grace's corner I imagine another engagement is about to be announced," remarked Hippy, grinning broadly. All eyes were immediately turned upon Grace and Tom.

Grace met their gaze with a shake of her head. "No," she said, "Tom and I are not even engaged. I must be free to go back to Overton next year to do my work there. I must look after my house for one year at least."

Tom's face clouded, but he said no more. David, too, was strangely silent. Anne had accepted an engagement to tour America with Everett Southard in Shakespearean roles the next season. Miss Southard was to accompany them on the tour. Still, David had the satisfaction of knowing that Anne loved him and that some day she would be his wife, although, like Grace, she would neither bind herself by a

promise nor allow him to place his ring upon her finger.

A little silence followed the announcement of the engagement of part of Mrs. Gray's Christmas children. Hippy had resumed his position on the railing, while Nora had slipped to the seat beside Grace, her hand in that of her friend. The little company of young people realized, to a person, that for them life was taking on a strange and earnest meaning, while Mrs. Gray, in spite of this garland of youth with which she delighted to beautify her latter days, felt very, very old.

Suddenly the silence was rudely broken. Hippy, who was more embarrassed than he cared to indicate, leaned too far back and lost his balance. There was a horrified gasp, a pair of stout legs waved in the air, and Theophilus Hippopotamus Wingate, as he invariably styled himself, fulfilled Miriam's prediction to the letter, and crashed ignominiously into the prickly arms of the big rose bush.

"There is no use in trying to be retrospective while Hippy is with us," declared Mrs. Gray when their mirth had subsided and Hippy had clambered to his feet. A long scratch ornamented one fat cheek and his hands showed the result of his fall among thorns. But his smile was as wide as ever.

"Poor Hippy," sympathized Miriam. "I'm so sorry."

"Then stop laughing," retorted Hippy.

"Yes, I'm sorry—for the rosebush," jeered Reddy.

Those who have learned to look upon Grace Harlowe and her companions as friends of old standing will meet her again in the near future. In "Grace Harlowe's Return to Overton Campus" they will find her at Harlowe House and learn just how successfully she carried on her chosen work.

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